

SOLIDARITY THROUGH FRIENDSHIP:
MAKING FRIENDS IN CAMEROON

By

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ABSTRACT

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Part One of this Demonstration Project is the examination of biblical texts in order to arrive at a methodology for cross-cultural encounters, especially missionary encounters occurring in a country so different from the missionary's own country. The texts considered have to do with friendship with Jesus and God; the unity of all people; and our ministry of reconciliation. This section looks at the tools used for biblical interpretation and how interpretation shapes the interpreter's agenda. The concept of a dedicated listener is put forward as the writer's approach to cross-cultural encounters. An example of the writer's own missionary experience in Japan is offered as an example of how the Gospel was introduced into Japan without regard for the cultural and economic conditions in Japan. Biblical tools of interpretation help readers understand the abusive and violent means used to introduce the Gospel in Africa.

Part Two tells the story of traveling to Cameroon and meeting with pastors, leaders and members of the Eglise Presbyterienne Camerounaise (EPC), the Francophone Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Modern history and economic conditions in Cameroon are discussed as a context of the story. Part Two tells the story of how the writer became acquainted with Cameroon and what the acquaintance means to the writer and the writer's family. The writer concludes with a hopeful outcome of Christianity in Cameroon and Africa, despite the way it was introduced many years ago by colonial imperialists.

Dedication

I offer this labor of love in sacred memory and honor of those who have run the race of the upward call of Christ and continue to run the race.

Of those who are now a part of the great Cloud of Witness:

The Reverend Doctor Williamson David McDowell for modeling what it means to be a pastor and to have a true pastor's heart.

Mrs. Hannah Clark, an Elder of the Church, who taught me that Joy is a fundamental element of a living faith.

This work is offered in honor of

Miss Margaret Lee Brice, an Elder of the Church, who has loved me until I learned how to begin loving myself. She is uniquely delightful.

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Professors and colleagues in the Doctor of Ministry program at New York Theological Seminary have inspired and encouraged me so much and helped me to discover a newness of life and to find my voice. It is such an exciting institution.

Site Team Members for my demonstration project contribute great joy to this journey. Jeff Boyd, Margaret Cinberg, Pam Hasegawa and Alfred Johnson, thank you for helping to equip me and for sharing this journey.

Katherine Jenkins Djom, Peter’s and my eldest daughter, gets so much thanks because without her, I could have never experienced so many cross cultural encounters and made many new friends in Cameroon. All of our research work was done among Francophone people and Katherine was my constant, faithful and effective translator. That Katherine and I could share such an experience was in and of itself a great experience of *Solidarity Through Friendship*. I know Katherine now as colleague, friend as well as beloved daughter.

Friends in all the Churches I have served:

Tokyo Union Church in Tokyo, Japan.

First Presbyterian Church of Caldwell, NJ.

Bethel Presbyterian Church in East Orange, NJ.

Grace Presbyterian Church in Montclair, NJ.

First Presbyterian Church of Hamburg, NJ.

The Moosic Presbyterian Church in Moosic, PA.

Langcliffe Presbyterian Church in Avoca, PA.

Colleagues and Friends in:

Presbytery of the James

Newark Presbytery

Newton Presbytery

Lackawanna Presbytery

Preface

The subject of this Thesis is the culmination of nearly 40 years of mission and pastoral work. However, I could also say, along with Plato, that what I have learned, I was born knowing. One of the things I have known and also learned from observation is that love is the organizing principle of the universe. I have always just known that all people are created by God and are precious and beautiful in God's sight. I have always just known that life is about learning and discovering from all kinds of people, especially those who are different from us. I have always just known that God's joy is uniquely manifest in the wide variety of people and cultures that make up our world and human joy resides in experiencing and celebrating all the variety of people and cultures.

All of these things that I was born knowing seem completely self-evident and it has consistently perplexed me throughout my life that many people do not know these things, nor believe these things. I constantly wonder how there can be people in the world who do not desire, above all things, peace, joy, communion, fellowship, harmony and unity? Yet all of human history is but a footnote to the reality that the majority of people who inhabit and have inhabited the Earth do not desire these things above all else.

Does this mean that I should give up knowing the things that I know, believing the things I believe? No. Throughout my ministry and pastoral work, I have strived to teach and preach these ideas. Though I may be in the minority when it comes to the things I know, still I am in great company, not only with those now living but also with those who have finished the race of life.

Though not an expressed goal of this Demonstration Project, it may be that *The Meaning of Revelation* by H. Richard Niebuhr, talked about in Part-One will give readers pause to stop and ponder how it is that we know what we know. The affirmation that God

is revelation will, I pray, encourage readers to appreciate their own confessional theology as unique and significant in meaning to God and to others.

Before traveling to Cameroon, I planned to make the concept of solidarity a major part of my finished writing, especially theories of solidarity. What I learned in Cameroon is that solidarity is best understood when experiencing solidarity for oneself. Like the word multi-cultural, or laughing or crying, solidarity is an event, which can only be grasped or described as it is happening.

Research for this Demonstration Project took me to the cities of Yaounde, Sackbayemi and Douala in Cameroon. Encounters in all three cities are now part of my sacred story and history. I do believe something will come of the meetings with these new friends. Whatever results from traveling to Cameroon, I believe, it is in the encounter where friendships are born that God is able to work profound miracles.

A significant part of this project is given over to biblical interpretation and the tools used to interpret and use scriptures as a basis for cross-cultural encounters, especially of the missionary variety. To some this may appear to be extraneous to the subject of the Demonstration Project. However, it is essential to this writer to have a biblical self-understanding and self-awareness when traveling to Cameroon given the abusive and violent manner in which Christianity was first introduced to the country and to the other countries in Africa.

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PART I

“WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?”

INTRODUCTION

Oh what's love got to do, got to do with it;
What's love but a second hand emotion?¹

When Tina Turner first sang these words in nineteen eighty-four, she could not have known the song would go to the number one spot on the Hot One Hundred list of rock 'n roll songs. The second line in the chorus, "*What's love but a second hand emotion*" is a real attention getter. It surely got my attention in nineteen eighty-four and evidently the words got a lot of other peoples' attention.

Love is a primary emotion, probably the strongest emotion in the world. Indeed, I believe love is the organizing principle of the universe. This is to say, God created all that we can see and imagine and arranged creation in a manner that allows us to experience love, unity, peace and tranquility. Love, unity, peace and tranquility – these are some of the best gifts God bestows upon creation. These gifts cannot be manufactured by creatures or human kind.

The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with assurances of God's love for all God's children and love is at the heart and center of Jesus' teachings. Interpreting scripture necessitates referring to other scripture passages in order to derive a clear picture of what any one passage is saying.

The Westminster Confession properly reminds us that not everything in Scripture is equally plain or equally important. We have to interpret the

¹ Tina Turner, "What's Love Got To Do With It," by Terry Britten and Graham Lyle, Capitol Records, 1984.

more difficult passages in the light of clearer ones. Scripture interprets Scripture, and we learn the whole meaning of Scripture by studying its parts and its parts by learning the whole.²

Love has a lot to do with how I understand cross-cultural encounters and even more to do with a missionary's response to God's call to ministry. In addition to love, self-awareness is essential to the missionary and, indeed, to any who would approach cross-cultural encounters in a sacred manner. Self-awareness allows us to know what we, as individuals, bring to the table when we interact with those who are from a different culture. Self-awareness illumines the shady, shadowy, areas of our thinking and believing so that we don't trip up or stumble into a misunderstanding or breakdown in communication. While God is able to work through our bumbling, even contrary, behavior, I believe God is best served when we are self-aware in a way that includes our relationship to God.

My self-awareness grows out of time spent in reflecting on and reviewing my actions and the consequences resulting from my behavior. Reflection and reviewing is based on applying biblical scriptures to my behavior and actions. Such action, reflection and reviewing leads to self-understanding. Self-understanding grows into self-awareness with the regular practice of reflection and reviewing our actions and their consequences. The standard or rubric which each of us use for our reflection and reviewing is part of what makes us each unique and special.

To illustrate I will turn to the story of holding my infant grandson, Che, while his father, Bernard, a Cameroonian, talked about his growing up in Cameroon, which was poor in terms of material goods, compared to the plethora of material goods we enjoy in

² Michael Horton, "Interpreting Scripture," *Modern Reformation* 19, no. 4 (July/August 2010): 10-15, <http://www.modernreformation.org/default.php?page=main&var1=Home>, accessed January 23, 2014.

the United States of America. Specifically, we were talking about soccer and soccer cleats. My son-in-law grew up playing soccer as did my children and we were wondering if little Che would also play and love soccer. Bernard shared that he had never had a pair of soccer cleats and did not know any other children who had soccer cleats. In a moment out of time, it seemed as if a presence or bond encircled us and my chest felt as if my breath was stolen. I thought I knew what was happening but I felt as if I needed to sit down to allow the experience to settle.

With reflection and review, I knew that God was calling me to ministry in Cameroon and that Che and Bernard were channels of God's calling to me. I had no idea at the time of the how or when this ministry would occur but the call itself was of an absolute nature, which gave me to understand that the call would become a historical reality. I was able to understand this call because of my awareness of how God called me through Sunday school and church throughout my growing up, during my studies in Bible and Theology at the seminary and God's call to ministry in Japan. I could not have understood any of this apart from an understanding of the biblical story, apart from the core of scriptures, which formed my own self-understanding as well as understanding of others and the world.

In order to achieve a biblical self-awareness, it is necessary to talk about the canon of the Bible. The books we find in the New Testament and the Old Testament were set or determined at several times throughout history. Comprehensively, these books of the Bible are called the canon. The canon used by Protestants is different from the canon used by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians. In other words, if you place a Catholic Bible and a Protestant Bible next to one another, you will quickly note from the

table of contents that the two are different. The Roman Catholic Bible contains books not found in Protestant Bibles. This is because the canon of the Bible was set for the last time (so far) following the Protestant Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century and they took out some of the books still contained in the Catholic Bible.

As biblical interpreters always have and continue to do in developing his or her understanding of biblical theology, specific scriptures are selected to form his or her own canon within the canon. In a similar way, each interpreter arrives at a core understanding of scripture by honing in on a series of scriptures that form a theme(s) that makes coherent the whole biblical story. Another way of saying this is that every interpreter of scripture has a 'canon within the canon'. The scriptures that I have chosen for this thesis, while not exhaustive of all the scriptures that constitute the biblical story or canon within the canon as I comprehend it, are: John 14:12, John 15:9-17, Ephesians 4:1-6 and II Corinthians 5:17-19.

These scriptures answer important questions related to *Solidarity through Friendship: Making Friends in Cameroon*. The scriptures from John answer the question: who are we? The Ephesians scripture answers the question: how are we related to one another? The II Corinthians scriptures speak to the question: what is the work we are to do together?

Before proceeding to analyze and interpret these scriptures, something needs to be said about biblical hermeneutics. The study of biblical hermeneutics is the study of the ways people interpret scripture, the lens through which people see scripture and the methods used for interpreting scripture. Understanding the hermeneutical lens, or method, of the interpreter will reveal the theological stance or agenda of the individual or

institution speaking or writing about a particular passage. Every one, be they lay or ordained, theologian or first-time Bible student, understands and applies a biblical passage according to the particular tradition in which they stand. Even rebels, like Hans Kung or Martin Luther, have reinterpreted scripture in opposition to their own traditions.

Virkler and Ayayo point out in their book on hermeneutics that in the interpretation of a text, hermeneutics considers the original medium as well as what language says, supposes, doesn't say, and implies. The process consists of several steps for best attaining the scriptural author's intended meaning(s).

To get at the meaning of a text, the interpreter looks at the words and the way they are used, the order of words in a sentence, the punctuation and tense of verbs. Thorough knowledge of grammar and the use of lexicons help the interpreter. Learning about the historical and cultural setting of the text is essential to understanding what is being said. For instance understanding the use of lambs and goats for ritual sacrifice in the ancient Near East, as well as other forms of ritual sacrifice, is necessary for interpreting both the Old and the New Testaments.

So often, one verse of scripture is taken out of context to prove someone's point of view. Hermeneutics teaches us that a single verse has to be considered in relation to the whole chapter, indeed, the whole book of the Bible. Hermeneutics teaches interpreters to look at a particular text asking how it relates to other texts on the same topic. For instance, love is mentioned in a number of books of the Bible. How do these various mentions of love relate to one another? These are but a few of the steps used by hermeneutics to arrive at a full understanding of a text.³

³ H. A. Virkler and K. Gerber Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 202–204.

David L. Barr states there are three obstacles that stand in the way of correctly interpreting the biblical writings: We speak a different language, we live approximately two millennia later, and we bring different expectations to the text. Additionally, Barr suggests that we approach the reading of the Bible with significantly different literary expectations than those in reading other forms of literature and writing.⁴

How does biblical hermeneutics relate to the overall theme of this thesis?

Let us take the example of the Great Commission given in Matthew 28:19:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Once Charlemagne (lived seven hundred sixty-eight to eight hundred-fourteen), Karl der Grosse or Charles the First, was baptized, Christianity became the official religion of what was then Europe. From the time of Charlemagne through the nineteenth century, the church (both Catholic and Protestant), has understood the Great Commission by focusing on the word “make.” Histories of Christianity are filled with dastardly stories about how many people were “made” disciples. Most of these examples were done without any regard for the model of making disciples that Jesus employed. Much of the history of the growth of the Christian Church is tightly bound with nationalistic expansion and colonization practices of various countries (Empires) throughout Europe.

The conclusion is that hermeneutics is very important in any kind of relational meeting between people of different cultures. One must be aware of one’s own hermeneutical lens or method of scriptural interpretation as it relates to the culture to be visited. For example, my hermeneutical moves are: God is love; Jesus is God’s

⁴ David L. Barr, *New Testament Story: An Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), 15.

expression of how brothers and sisters are to live together in love; all God's children are one people and thus communion, fellowship, communication, understanding is possible; history and the present is purposive, the New Creation begun as an historical event is a present reality through the work of the Holy Spirit and this present reality is the Kingdom of God and all life is sacred.

Something more has to be said when interpreting scriptures in relationship to non-Western countries and cultures. How the Bible and Christian tradition were introduced into non-Western countries and cultures compounds the challenges today of interpreting scripture as it relates to a call to go to another culture in order to respond to God's call to ministry. For example, before moving to Japan to live and minister as a missionary, I studied how Christianity was brought to Japan.

St. Francis Xavier is credited by many with having brought Christianity to Japan in the mid-sixteenth century. The ship he sailed into Japan on was a Portuguese one as this was during the peak of the Portuguese Empires' quest to establish trade with both Japan and China. The ship Xavier sailed in on, and many other ships which sailed to Japan during this period of time, also carried gunpowder and other war instruments. The only interest Japan had at that time in Europeans was learning how to use gunpowder and purchasing war instruments from them. Thus the Gospel and the guns entered simultaneously and remained intertwined in the minds of the Japanese.

The Japanese distrust of Westerners had a lot to do with the fear that Western missionaries were sent by their sovereigns to conquer the land. In the mid-nineteenth century, shipwrecked Japanese sailors were captured by both the Spanish and the Dutch; they were enslaved and subjected to cruelties. Also, the behavior of Dutch and Spanish

visitors to Japan offended the moral values of the Japanese, who themselves were not noted for strong morals at that time.⁵

Today, one to two million Japanese are Christian (about one percent of Japanese population). Many of them live in Western Japan where the missionaries' activities were greatest during the sixteenth century. The extremely low number of Christians in Japan, despite some of the most brilliant Catholic and Protestant missionaries and theologians working in Japan, has a lot to do with the original stigma of “the Gospel and the guns” as well as lack of regard for the culture, education and economic strength of Japan. Christianity has always been regarded as something foreign and, possibly, diabolical as it was first offered by Westerners who were more interested in colonization than living out Jesus’ command to love one another.

Thus, any Christian missionary to Japan has to interpret the biblical basis of his or her call to ministry in Japan in terms of what the Bible has meant and represents to the Japanese in the past. Before going to Japan I decided, in light of the history of Christianity in Japan, to approach encounters with Japanese with humility and respect for the Japanese culture, the long history of Japan and its’ culture and the amazing recovery from the devastation of World War Two. Additionally, I decided to set aside the use of words about the Christian faith and focus on showing forth my faith through exhibition of some of the gifts of the Spirit, such as love, peace and joy. I can say in hindsight that exhibiting joy in one’s own life is a powerful witness to Japanese people as their behavior is based on serious expectations from a complex network of relationships. Joy does not play a big part in their education or in their life as adults. The Japanese are a serious

⁵ Otis Cary, *A History of Christianity in Japan: Protestant Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1909), 11-28.

people. This example is meant to illustrate the importance of the individual's biblical story and how that story relates to the history and culture of the country to which the individual is called.

Africa abounds with stories – often abusive, even violent – of how Christianity was introduced to the various countries and cultures within the continent. Christianity was brought to Cameroon by evangelical Protestants from Germany. The first Europeans to colonize Cameroon were German. Germans ruled the colony of Kamerun from eighteen eighty-four through nineteen-sixteen. They taught schools entirely in the German language and when they baptized, they replaced indigenous names with western names, in a sense alienating indigenous people from themselves and their culture.

In *Gods and Soldiers: The Penguin Anthology of Contemporary African Writing*, Patrice Nganang writes the essay on “Cameroon: The Senghor Complex.”

I am not a negro and I was never one. The first time I heard the word used in relation to myself, I was twenty years old. At the time I was in Germany. I was crossing the street, rushing a little and bumped into a young man who threw out ‘Neger’. I remember, rather than being dumbfounded, I was entirely surprised. I didn’t know the word had been addressed to me. I recount the episode here because Senghor translated Negritude into German as *Negersein* – the fact of being negro. Black, I was not that either until too late and it too involved Germany, even though it was finally and especially the United States that taught me what black signifies. When I look in the mirror, I don’t see a black. I see a Cameroonian, yes, that I am and will remain. I have defined myself as that since childhood, and even today, adult, and having lived on three continents, I always return to what is for me a simple fact – as well as a passport – despite it not being a commitment.⁶

Patrice Nganang goes on to analyze his own experience in dialogue with Leopold Sedar Senghor, poet, politician, cultural theorist, who was the first president of Senegal.

⁶ Patrice Nganang, “Cameroon: The Senghor Complex,” in *Gods and Soldiers: The Penguin Anthology of Contemporary African Writing* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 87-88.

In the 1930's Senghor and other francophone black intellectuals, writers and politicians in France, founded a new literary and ideological movement, *Negritude*. *Negritude* literally means “black-ness.”

The Negritude writers found solidarity in a common black identity as a rejection of French colonial racism. Believing they shared the black heritage of the African diaspora was the best tool in fighting against French political and intellectual hegemony and domination. This movement was an attempt to reclaim what it meant to be African before the arrival of western missionaries and colonizers.

Thinking and writing in much the same way as Senghor, Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia from nineteen sixty-four through nineteen ninety-one, wrote that

The humanistic character of the African has been damaged and even partly destroyed by Africa’s long exposure to the West. Colonialism introduced into Africa many attitudes that could not be naturally integrated into existing traditions. Thus, while Europe opened new vistas of freedom by freeing Africans from disease, ignorance, superstition and even from slavery, it also introduced a new form of servitude which arises from the Inferiority Complex of the African vis-à-vis the technically superior Europeans.

Similarly, while colonialism brought a new security by introducing the rule of law against the arbitrary power of chiefs; and brought technical and economic developments which make man less dependent on nature, it has also robbed the African of the traditional security which he/she found in their tribal ties and in the old social web of relationships.

Finally, while it introduced a broader horizon into people's life by making them look beyond the limits of their villages, and by bringing about new associations: political parties, churches, trade unions, and...It has also brought to many people a new form of loneliness arising from urbanization and from the rootlessness of detribalized existence. The African, himself/herself, at least partly, still carries the blame of their inferiority complex and their split personality.⁷

⁷ Denis Ghislain, “Teilhard de Chardin and Senghor on the Civilization of the Universal,” http://www.memoireonline.com/04/08/1003/m_teilhard-de-chardin-senghor-civilization-of-the-universal14.html, accessed January 8, 2014.

Kayemb “Uriel” Nawej goes beyond Senghor and Kaunda in his book, *White Poison*, written in two thousand-seven. He is a member of the Lunda ethnic group that originated in the seventeenth century in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. He asserts that Africans who continue to use Christian names are one of the extraordinary proofs that black people stay “colonized.”

The thesis of *White Poison* is that Christianity, as it was brought to Africa by missionaries of European colonial powers, colonized Africans spiritually, economically and politically. This was done by alienating Africans from their ancestors by imposing foreign languages, foreign, Christian names and the institution of slavery. While he cites many historical writings by kings and popes, he turns especially to King Leopold II of Belgium, whose dastardly deeds in “Belgian” Congo have been well documented by historians. The inclusion of the speech King Leopold II gave to missionaries departing for Africa in eighteen eighty-three is especially appalling:

Reverend Fathers and Dear Compatriots:

The task entrusted to you is very delicate to fulfill and requires some tact. Priests, you will go of course to evangelize, but your evangelization must be inspired above all by the interests of Belgium.

There, Dear Compatriots, are some of the principles that you must apply. Evangelize Negroes the African way, so that they stay forever in submission to white colonists, so that they never rebel against the injustices they will have to suffer from us. Make them meditate every day, **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO WEEP BECAUSE THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS THEIRS.** Always convert Blacks by using the whip.

Keep their women for nine months into submission and have them working freely for you. Then force them to pay you as a gesture of gratitude – goats, chickens or eggs – every time you visit their villages. Do make sure that Blacks never become rich. Sing every day that it is impossible for rich men to enter heaven. Make them pay a tax each week

at the Sunday mass. Then use this money normally destined for the poor and transfer your missions into flourishing commercial centers.⁸

Lest we think King Leopold II's instructions unique, we can turn to the words of Pope Nicholas V (two years after the fall of Constantinople in fourteen fifty-three) to hear the violence towards Africans that characterized papal thinking at the time.

In fourteen fifty-three, Pope Nicholas V issued to King Alfonso V of Portugal the bull, *Romanus Pontifex*, declaring war against all non-Christians throughout the world, and specifically sanctioning and promoting the conquest, colonization, and exploitation of non-Christian nations and their territories.

Under various theological and legal doctrines formulated during and after the Crusades, non-Christians were considered enemies of the Catholic faith and, as such, less than human. Accordingly, in the bull of fourteen fifty-three, Pope Nicholas directed King Alfonso to capture, vanquish, and subdue the Saracens, pagans, and other enemies of Christ, to put them into perpetual slavery, and to take all their possessions and property. Acting on this papal privilege, Portugal continued to traffic in African slaves, and expanded its royal dominions by making discoveries along the western coast of Africa, claiming those lands as Portuguese territory.

Among other things, free and full power is given to the aforesaid King Alfonso to invade, search out, capture, vanquish and subdue all Saracens (Blacks) and pagans whosoever, and other enemies of Christ anywhere, and to destroy or take possession of their kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to appropriate to himself and his successors those kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.⁹

Traditional tools of biblical criticism, such as biblical hermeneutics, cannot illumine or explain the abusive and oftentimes violent way Christianity was introduced to all the countries in Africa because the introduction of Christianity to Africa was a tool of

⁸ As quoted in Kayemb "Uriel" Naweji, *White Poison: A Black Christian is a Traitor to the Memory of His Ancestors*, 12-13, http://nlongi.com/books/WHITE_POISON.pdf, accessed January 8, 2014.

⁹ "Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The Legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Prejudice," <http://endrtimes.blogspot.com/2007/06/blog-post.html>, accessed January 8, 2014.

colonial imperialism, a tool of the State. The self-understanding of those missionaries was based on a biblical self-awareness completely distorted and perverted by the goals of colonial imperialism. It is likely that a missionary during those times understood themselves as an agent of State, rather than an agent of Christ. For better or worse, the current economic and social conditions found in the various countries in Africa cannot be divorced from a Christianity that was bastardized by colonial imperialists.

Let us remember again Charlemagne's baptism in the late eight-century. His baptism made Christianity the official or state religion of the western world. This action later gave rise to the idea of the divine rights of kings and emperors. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that Charlemagne baptized Christianity, for once he was baptized and Christianity became the official or state religion, many dastardly acts were committed in the name of Christianity which became, by Charlemagne's baptism, the state religion.

Agreeing with a lot of what Kayemb "Uriel" Nawej has to say in *White Poison* about the destructiveness of Christianity to African people and culture, still we human beings are limited in our vision and understanding. It is quite possible that out of the corrupted version of Christianity introduced in Africa by abusive and violent means by colonial imperialists, the continuation of the true Church of Christ emerges even now. For as the church in the western world is dying, soon to implode upon itself, the church in Africa (and also in South America where Christianity was introduced as abusively as it was in Africa) is growing, vital and strong. Some of this vitality grows out of African Christians incorporating spiritual practices from their indigenous religions.

A western missionary or Christian responding to God's call to ministry in any country in Africa needs to approach that call realizing that there is a tendency in the West

to lump all African cultures together. There is a need to be a dedicated listener in order to hear the stories and the voices that continue on the hearts and spirits of Africans despite the overlay Western Christianity has used to obscure indigenous stories and voices.

“Dedicated Listening” is the term coined to describe the way I listen to Scripture as well as the way I move into a differing culture with the intention of responding to God’s call to ministry. Dedicated Listening is hearing scripture as well as people from other cultures without a pre-conceived agenda. It is a patient, disciplined kind of listening that manages to hold back one’s responses and interpretation during the early stage of encounter. Dedicated Listening has integrity and honesty in that one is aware of the values one brings to any listening experience and does not allow these values to pre-judge what the other person(s) is saying. Dedicated listening is reflective, thoughtful, giving the time necessary to allow faithful hearing not only of the words said but also listening to the historical and cultural situation out of which the words come. Dedicated listening especially takes note of the body language of the speaker. Only dedicated listening, assisted by the ever present Holy Spirit of God’s love, can enable the gifts of love, peace, tranquility and union – all of which are not man-made gifts, but God’s gifts – to arise in a cross cultural encounter between two differing peoples.

When we left for Cameroon in August, two thousand-thirteen, it was with a definite mind-set based on how I understood scriptural passages from my canon within the canon and an awareness of the fracturing way Christianity had been introduced in Cameroon. I had a set of questions for interviews, whether I would use them or not was left undecided. I understood myself as a dedicated listener, praying and trusting that the presence of God’s Holy Spirit of love would manifest itself during encounters to the end

that I would learn what my call to ministry in Cameroon entailed and open to whatever gifts the Holy Spirit might bestow. I went with a yearning to hear stories that I had never heard before and knowing that God's Holy Spirit of love would enlarge me spiritually and possibly those I encountered also. I went with the awareness that my outward appearance as a white Westerner would connote things to Cameroonians that I could not and would not be aware of. This awareness led to the understanding of the importance of my body language and words, expressing politeness, respect, kindness, reverence, gentility and genuineness to be of utmost importance.

We move on to the scriptures that form an important part of my canon within the canon, especially as it relates to being a missionary, as well as a person called by God to a new ministry, whose definition would reveal itself, in a cross-cultural setting whose history with Christianity was a fracturing experience. The intention in examining these scriptures is to convey my own self understanding and understanding of all human beings as sacred people, beloved by God.

CHAPTER 2

John 14:12-24 and John 15:9-17

Both of these passages are part of Jesus' Farewell Discourse or last testament and present many challenges to interpreters. There are other Farewell Discourses in the Bible, notably: Jacob's farewell and blessing of his twelve sons – Genesis 49; Joshua's farewell address – Joshua 22-24; David's farewell and instructions to Solomon – I Chronicles 28-29. The most extended example of the farewell address is in Deuteronomy, in which the entire book is cast as Moses' farewell speeches to his people.

Jesus' Farewell Discourse can be divided into four broad units:

- 14:1-31 "I will not leave you orphaned"
- 15:1-17 "Abide in my love"
- 15:18-16:4a "I have chosen you out of the world"
- 16:4b-33 "It is to your advantage that I go away"¹⁰

John 14:12-24

Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father,

¹⁰ Abingdon Press. *The New Interpreter's Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical*, Vol 9 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 737-38.

and I will love them and reveal myself to them.’ Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, ‘Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me’¹¹.

All of Jesus’ words in 14:12-24 address the shape of the community’s life after the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Bultmann states the theological questions of these verses: “Can the disciples still love Jesus when he is gone? Can the next generation still love Jesus, without having had a personal relationship with Jesus?”¹²

John 14:12-24 answers yes to these questions and not only can the disciples still love Jesus but the text indicates that all who love Jesus and follow the commandments will be loved by God. Even though Jesus is addressing his disciples, his words encompass whoever keeps the commandments and love him will be loved by God. Had Jesus meant his words only for the disciples he would not have switched from you to they in verse 21. Beginning in verse 21 and continuing to the end of the passage in verse 24, Jesus uses only those and they language, as opposed to you.

Jesus’ teachings to the disciples here about love chart the continuation of his own life into the life of his followers and to us.

Jesus lived out God’s love of him by keeping God’s commandments, by making God known to the world, by offering God’s promise of salvation to the world, by loving fully, even to the extent of laying down his life. Jesus’ union with God was not a private, mystical union, in which their love for one another was only self-beneficial – that is, for the glory of God and Jesus alone - with no eye to the life of God’s creation. On the contrary, the love of God and Jesus was a public love, first revealed in the

¹¹ The New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition), copyright 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. All subsequent biblical quotations will come from this version of the Holy Bible.

¹² Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1971), 613.

incarnation and repeatedly revealed in Jesus' words and works throughout his ministry.

The glorification of God in Jesus' works was for the sake of those to whom Jesus came, so that they might believe and come to share in the love of God and Jesus.

The believer's union with God and Jesus is possible after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, but like the union of God and Jesus, it is not a private, mystical union of the believer with his or her God. Jesus' words in vv. 12-24 consistently point to the communal nature of union and relationship with Jesus after the end of his earthly ministry. The promises of divine presence are promises made to the community, not to the individual. All of the personal pronouns in these verses are second-person plural, not singular. Jesus does not promise the Paraclete (Holy Spirit), or his own return, to individuals but to communities who live together in love.

When Jesus' disciples follow his own model of love, then it is possible for relationship with Jesus to extend beyond the first generation of believers.

Relationship with Jesus does not depend on his physical presence, but on the presence of the love of God in the life of the community. The insistence of these verses on love as the sign of fidelity to Jesus and the way to communion with God, Jesus and the Paraclete suggests that a believing community in any generation will enter into relationship with Jesus only when it takes on and lives out the love of the incarnation.¹³

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another (John 15:9-17).

¹³ Abingdon Press. *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 749-50.

In John 15:9-17, we focus on friendship, specifically what Jesus meant when he called his disciples, and us, friends. Friendship is a universal value and many tomes have been written regarding the meaning and value of friendship. Yet the best expression of friendship is found in the Gospel of John: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends” (John 15:13). The friendship of the best friend of all is highlighted in John's gospel. In the synoptic gospels the concept of friend is not nearly as prominent as it is in the gospel of John. In Luke and Matthew, the concept is found in rather negative contexts. Luke refers to friends as handing over Christians in times of persecution (21:16). In Matthew, Jesus as friend is a source of criticism for his opponents. They accurately accuse him of being “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (11:19). Jesus is criticized for recognizing no boundaries in friendship, for disregarding ritual purity.

But the gospel of John is a different story. Here the word friend (*philo*) occurs six times. Jesus mentions the “friend of the bridegroom” in a positive context in 3:29. Jesus refers to Lazarus as “our Friend” (11:11). We are told that the good shepherd “lays down his life for his friends” (10:11). The disciples are elevated from servants to friends (*philo*) in John 15:13-15. The crowd taunts Pilate, calling him “no friend of the emperor” (if he releases Jesus) in John 19:12.

Then there is the verb to love: *phileo*. The Father loves the Son and shares his plans and purposes with him, which is what friends do (John 5:20). Jesus loves his friend Lazarus (11:36). The one who loves his life will lose it (12:25). The Father loves the disciples because they have loved Jesus (16:27). There are five references in John to the

disciple whom Jesus loved. And in chapter 21:15-17 there is the conversation between Jesus and Peter about Peter's love, or lack thereof, for Jesus.

In John 15: 9-17, immediately following on the metaphor of the vine and the branches, Jesus teaches the disciples that discipleship means friendship with him and with God. Discipleship is being a branch of the vine. It is relational. Hence Jesus' use of the term "friends" for his followers: "I no longer call you servants...I have called you friends" (v. 14). Jesus distinguishes friendship from servanthood. To be a friend is to share a personal relationship and to be made aware of the plans and purposes of the other. This is how the Father has related to the Son (John 5:20). Thus, just as Jesus learned from the Father, so now he makes known his purposes to his disciples. Jesus states the core value of friendship in the community of followers: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

There are precedents for this sacrificial notion of friendship. We encounter the notion of friendship in the Old Testament, in Jewish writings between the testaments and in Greek and Roman philosophy. In the Old Testament several people are said to be friends of God, including Abraham (2 Chronicles 20:7; Is 41:8) and Moses (Exodus 33:11). Older Jewish sources sometimes treated the subject of friendship (Proverbs 17:17; 22:24; 27:6, 10, Sirach 6:5-17, 9:10, 12:8-9, 13:21, 37:1-6).

The theme was most fully developed in Greco-Roman writings and Jewish texts familiar with these conventions. Friendship was a favorite topic among the philosophers. The 5th century B.C.E. philosopher, Pythagorus, famously said, friends have all things in common. The philosophical ideal of friendship was nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection. These bonds of

loyalty and affection mean that a friend is someone for whom I may die, whom I may follow into exile, against whose death I may stake my own life, and pay the pledge.

Pythagoras founded a community that emphasized friendship, the epitome of all virtues. Friendship, he believed, called for the obliteration of estrangement and an ethic of non-retaliation. Competition and rivalry have no place in friendship. Trust is essential. Falsehood is not to be born. Much of this Pythagorean thought was adopted by the Stoics and by the early Christian communities as well. New Testament analogies would be the church as the body of Christ and the community of goods in the Jerusalem communities (Acts 4:32-37 and 1 Corinthians 12-14). Socrates viewed friendship as the most precious of all possessions, the greatest blessing that a person can possess. A friend shows generosity and courage in supplying every need of his friend. For some friends, one would sacrifice one's own life.¹⁴

Sallie McFague, in her book *Models of God*, discusses the characteristics of friendship in biblical, theological terms. Friendship does not arise from necessity. We enter into it freely. Friendship is based on a disinterested love for the unique characteristics of the other. Friendship forms strong bonds and the betrayal of a friend ranks as the most dastardly of deeds. She points out that Dante reserves the inner circle of Hell for Judas, Brutus, and Cassius. Then and now, friendship with Jesus brings followers into a relationship of reciprocal love, creating a community in which people who

¹⁴ Alyce M. McKenzie, "The Best Friend of All: Reflections on John 15:9-17," <http://www.patheos.com/Progressive-Christian/Best-Friend-of-All-Alyce-McKenzie-05-07-2012>, accessed January 8, 2014.

addressed each other as “friends” could realize the ideal of mutual self-sacrifice (15:12-14).¹⁵

With painful honesty the Gospel of John records that Jesus’ first and closest disciples were on their best days easily distracted from their love of God, care for one another, and concern for their neighbors. Some, like Judas, even grew to be wayward, rebellious, and mean. Yet turning to all of these would-be followers, Jesus explained his and the Father’s deep, sacrificial love for them in these words: “You did not choose me, but I chose you” and “I have called you *friends*” (15:15-16).

Today we rarely use friendship to describe what John calls eternal life, the life of salvation that is made possible through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Yet in the Gospel of John, friendship is the ultimate relationship with God and with one another. Since in Greek the word for friend, *philos*, comes from a common verb for love, *phileo*, in the New Testament a friend is immediately understood as one who loves. This fundamental connection between love and friendship is an essential starting point for reclaiming friendship as a resource for faith and ethics for contemporary Christians.

Friendship was such a key relationship in the ancient world—the glue binding free persons to one another and a community—that friends ideally might sacrifice their lives for one another and the common good. What is so remarkable is that Jesus fully lives out this cultural ideal.

What Jesus teaches, he is already living. Jesus’ entire life and death is an act of friendship. Some so-called friends are just manipulators. They are not honest with us; they flatter us in order to further their own ends. (The phrase “friend of the emperor” in

¹⁵ Sallie McFague, *Models of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1987), 92, 181-183.

John 19:12 nicely captures such political expediency.) But Jesus is a true friend who speaks honestly and raises us to friendship by his open speech. The dramatic shift from a conditional (you are my friends *if* you do what I command you) to an assertion (I have called you friends), does not depend on something the disciples do, because their enactment of Jesus' commandments still remains in the future. No, it is something that Jesus has done: "I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15). The disciples are Jesus' friends because he has spoken to them openly; he has made known to them everything that he has heard from the Father.

Because Jesus, in his life and death, his words and deeds, showed and told his followers everything about God's love, his followers' relationship to the world and to one another was forever changed. Jesus' openness is a model of how we are to treat one another, but it also provides the wellspring that makes our acts of friendship possible.

Contemporary Christian piety tends to place words like sin, redemption, atonement, justification, repentance, and born again at the center of conversations about what it means to live out the offer of salvation made available through the life and death of Jesus Christ. Friendship does not figure prominently in such a theological world, since friendship is normally relegated to the secular realm, as exemplified by the prominence of friends as the pivot of plots in television shows and movies. Yet as the Gospel of John shows, nothing could be farther from the truth. For Jesus, friendship is the ultimate relationship with God and one another.¹⁶

¹⁶ Gail R. O'Day, "I Have Called You Friends," in *Friendship: A Christian Study and Reflection* (Houston: Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2008), <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/61108.pdf>, accessed January 8, 2014.

Returning to the discussion of this writer's 'canon within the canon', it was noted that the scripture passages from John (discussed above) speak to the question of *who are we in relation to God and Christ*. Through both God's love for us and the continuation of the practice of love as modeled by Christ, we are the ones who will do greater things than Christ; that is to say we have union with God and Christ. This union we share with God and Christ is not a private, mystical union. The nature of our union is communal as is demonstrated in the use of plural pronouns in vv. 12-24. Also, the promise of the *Paraclete* (Holy Spirit) is to the community. Christ elevates us from servants to friends (15:14). Christ can do this because everything we need to know about God, Christ teaches us. Christ teaches us the model for being God and Christ's friends – loving one another as Christ has loved us and loved God.

These passages from John illumine my understanding of responding to God's call to ministry in Cameroon. These passages tell me that I am a direct continuation of Christ's ministry in so far as I practice love as modeled by Christ and am obedient to God's commandments. The effectiveness of my ministry is not solely dependent upon my actions alone but by the union I have with God and Christ given me in baptism and sustained through participation with friends in our faith community. The authenticity of my ministry grows out of being God and Christ's friends because I practice the model of love Christ showed us during his earthly ministry and follow the commandments of God.

The call to ministry in the Presbyterian tradition is understood to be both a personal call and a public call. By far, the greatest attention is paid to the public nature of call in our tradition. The standards of education in theological and biblical studies are among the highest in both the Catholic and Protestant Traditions. Achieving graduation

in these disciplines is only the beginning of the process in determining a public call. Besides attending and graduating from a Seminary, the person must be recommended by the Session (Ruling Body) of the Church to the Presbytery for status as one seeking ordination. Following graduation from Seminary, one still has to pass the Standard Ordination Exams that test every aspect of biblical knowledge, theological awareness and understanding, knowledge of the sacraments and competence in church governance. Achieving these academic standards, one is able to present oneself to his or her presbytery (usually a group of one hundred or more persons) for validation of their public call to ministry. The final stage of validating a public call to ministry only occurs when a person is called by a congregation to be their pastor, associate pastor or to a specialized ministry such as chaplaincy or teaching in a religious institution or called by the denomination to service as a missionary.

There are no appointments to a church by a Bishop or Superintendent. Each step of the process to become a pastor is evaluated by a group of people, each of whom has one vote. The public nature of call to ministry in the Presbyterian tradition is symbolic of the communal nature of our union with God and Christ. The emphasis in the Presbyterian Tradition is not on the goodness of the person but on the willingness to be servants of Christ.

One of the gifts of the aging process is the ability to see the whole of one's life as opposed to the bits and pieces gleaned during our growing and maturing years. Saying this reminds me of the stained glass window in the Tokyo Union Church in Tokyo, Japan. The current church building was erected in nineteen seventy-nine and nineteen-eighty

while I served as the Associate Pastor. This was a major challenge as the new building was erected on the same land as the former building.

Where would the congregation worship and hold its many classes and programs which occurred throughout the week? During the year and a half of rebuilding, the congregation worshipped, held classes and shared in fellowship in a goodly number of different locations. Keeping the congregation apprised of location, before the days of commonly used personal computers and laptops, was a major challenge but we managed the challenge without losing members as well as continuing to be able to attract worshippers from hotels.

The shape of the new church was modern and unique at that time. The model depicted a molded, rounded piece of clay with a tall, towering steeple emerging in an organic way from the center of the rounded base. The entire building and steeple would be stark white except for the color in the stained glass window and the color in the roof. The new building was completely distinguished from all other buildings on the busy thoroughfare of Omote Sando. The towering, stark white steeple could be readily seen from either direction by walkers and drivers.

The steeple was designed with the plan for a tall, narrow stained glass window. The contract was awarded to a petite Japanese woman who was a Christian. She was given the text depicting the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove upon Jesus at his Baptism. She was instructed to depict the text in an abstract rendering as opposed to a representational rendering. Given the unusual height of the window and its relative narrowness, she built the window in sections and it was erected in sections. The window is an architectural, engineering masterpiece that dominates the sanctuary. Depending on

where one sits in the Sanctuary, one sees more or less of the sweeping upward sections of the window. The dove is rendered in large, chunky, white pieces of glass against a backdrop of blue and purple, smaller pieces of chunky glass. The only viewing spot for seeing the entire sweep of the dove is by standing directly beneath the window and stretching the neck to look up to the top. However, people walking and driving along the street can see the complete descent of the large, chunky, white pieces of glass depicting the dove.

From the first moment I saw the window, I was reminded of God's revelation in Christ and how that revelation might appear differently to folks depending on where they were located and how God's light continues to shine in the world. The window taught me that God reveals God's self in all places and that God's revelation might appear differently to folks according to whether or not they were in a teachable frame of mind and at what point they were in their life's journey.

A similar analogy applies to human life. Early on we can see only bits and pieces of ourselves. As we grow and mature, we see more clearly how God works with us. Towards the end of life we can, if we really stretch, see how God has called us into life and prepared and fashioned us for that call through our many and varied life experiences as well as through the many people with whom we share experience.

I see now, at 65 years of age, and after forty years of ministry how God began to fashion me for reaching out to others in order to know them and love them as God loves me. God called me out of the world, so to speak, and into God's Kingdom from a very early age. It all began in nineteen fifty-four, when I entered first grade in Charleston, West Virginia, and began to interact with African American children for the first time. At

age five I had seen African American people from a distance but had never interacted with a person of color. Though I cannot remember the exact year, it was during elementary school that I first experienced the presence of God leading me. It happened as my girlfriend and I were walking and talking about what we wanted to do when we grew up. I didn't have the clear ideas she had but as I looked up at the hills all around us, I became aware that my future lay far beyond the surrounding hills.

Each year of school meant more and more African American friends. We could play together at school but we still lived in separate neighborhoods. When my brother, who is two years older than me, entered junior high school, he began to bring home some of his African American friends. When I entered junior high school two years later, I, along with several of my girlfriends, began to take notice of African American boys. Mostly we would sit together at lunch and talk after school. One high school age girlfriend dated an African American guy. Their dates consisted mostly of her going to his house and often I went to his house too, as did a few other white girlfriends. While his mother endured this, I didn't know how she felt about it.

During these junior high school years, I began to read about American slavery. Those books hurt my heart and made me angry. Not being able to socialize with African American teenagers in an open manner and reading those books about slavery gave rise to rebellion in my heart. My mother and I often came into conflict as she tried to thwart my rebelliousness and interest in African American people.

The summer before entering high school, 1962, we moved to Richmond, Virginia, my father's home and where all his family lived. I saw for the first time how segregation really worked. While I had been socializing with African American kids at school since

nineteen fifty-four, schools in Richmond, Virginia, (at least some of them) were just beginning their first year of desegregation! In the mornings and afternoons, the parking lot in front of our high school was filled with yellow school buses taking white and black kids all over the city in order to achieve some degree of integration.

I will always remember the year nineteen sixty-two because that is the year that James Meredith went to Ole Miss, the University of Mississippi, to take up the admission he had been granted as the first African American to ever attend that all white school. I can still feel the fear from watching the news on television showing all the racial hatred aimed towards him. I wrote a letter to him and addressed it care of the University of Mississippi. I only remember wishing him well and saying that I would pray for him. I never received a reply and realized as I got older that he most likely never received my letter.

Experiencing the beginning of desegregation after years of already living in a somewhat integrated manner was like a neck jerk or stepping back in time. I was astounded by a degree of racial prejudice I had not experienced before. There was no socializing with African Americans at school or anywhere else. I listened to my paternal grandmother speak of “the great war.” When I would clarify, “oh, you mean World War Two?” She would reply, “No, I mean the Civil War.”

While my interactions and socializing took a hiatus, I continued to read during high school about American slavery and Nazi dominated Europe during the Third Reich. My mind and heart screamed at the continuing dastardly acts of discrimination against African Americans and the seeds were sown for a deep distrust of the American government. These seeds grew during the Vietnam years, especially when I entered

university in nineteen sixty-seven along with many returning Vietnam War veterans. Mostly these veterans were either physically or emotionally handicapped as a result of what they had experienced while serving in Vietnam.

By this time in my development, I did not like being an American. It was during university that this dislike grew into disgust. While living through early attempts in desegregation was the major influence on shaping me, a second, subtler force was at work trying to shape me and all Americans: the “Cold War.” Some of the things America’s Cold War against communism and the Soviet Union insisted upon were that all American children become stronger than communist children, especially those in the Soviet Union. So we exercised on school playgrounds and in gymnasiums with programs created by the American government so that we would become stronger than communist children.

Intellectually the Cold War, propelled by John Foster Dulles who was Secretary of State during the nineteen-fifties, and, his brother, Allen Dulles who was Director of the Central Intelligence Agency during the same period, strove to convince the American people that communists were everywhere and determined to destroy American democracy, society and government. I never brought into this communist and Soviet phobia even though I had no experience to justify my doubt.

Spending the summer of 1969 living in West Germany and traveling to East Germany, my eyes and ears were opened to new realities. I was in Germany with my German professor from university and seven other students who, like me, wanted to learn how to speak German and experience German culture. We spent a good deal of time with Germans also of university age. Boy did they run circles around us American students in

terms of knowledge of history, economics and politics. We American students simply could not compete with their amount of knowledge and their ability to analyze current and past political events.

I returned to America after the summer was over with a much deeper distrust of the American government and dedicated to never being in a position again to feel so ignorant. I began my quest for greater knowledge of history and current events by subscribing to several publications: *Punch* magazine, devoted to humorously analyzing world current events and culture from a British point of view; *The New Republic* devoted to analyzing current politics from a point of view divergent from the American government; and *The Christian Science Monitor*, a newspaper dedicated to covering news of the whole world as opposed to most American newspapers which gave very little information and insight into the rest of the world.

Living and traveling in East and West Germany during 1969 began the slow debunking of America's Cold War propaganda for me. Growing up and being educated to believe that, as Americans, we were the brightest and the best, the pinnacle of creation, was easily debunked by the sophistication and wealth I witnessed in West Germany and the strength and power of communism was invalidated as I witnessed the poverty and lack of progress in East Germany. Conditioned to fear and tremble the presence of communist police, our experience interacting with communist police when we crossed the check point into East Germany was a gentle experience. Mostly the police looked at our German text books and expressed admiration that we were studying their language.

I wanted desperately to believe in something of American culture and as I knew I could not believe in the American government, I began to experience God's call to serve

the Presbyterian Church. Being a member of the Presbyterian Church in the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies was something I was proud of as the church was during those years the work of addressing equal right for African Americans and focusing on social inequalities and problems, such as world hunger.

Thus in nineteen seventy-one, I entered Union Theological Seminary to pursue a Master of Divinity degree as well as truths in which I could believe. Union Theological Seminary in Virginia from nineteen seventy-one to nineteen seventy-five was the perfect environment for me. Everyone, married students, single students and all the professors and their families, lived on the campus and community life was rich and nurturing. It was an exciting community of forthright speaking and an arena in which doubts could easily be expressed. It seemed to me to be the very antithesis of the American government so I flourished.

I had never known a woman to be a Presbyterian Pastor and we were only seven women in a school of less than one hundred fifty students, so many doubts plagued me as I considered whether God was, indeed, calling me to ministry. The seminary received many calls from local churches to supply preachers and those were my first attempts at preaching. They were positive experiences. During my second year I was confronted with the decision of whether or not to do an intern year, which the seminary advocated. The decision was made when a professor asked if I had ever considered going to Japan. Truly taken aback as all my attention was towards Europe and the ancient Near East, I was amazed. He gave me some books and novels to read and offered me the opportunity to serve the Tokyo Union Church as their seminary intern the following year.

Perceiving from the readings that Japan probably held nothing of my identity in its history and culture, still I felt God leading me to go there. Entering Tokyo, Japan, in the summer of nineteen seventy-three in the employ of the Tokyo Union Church, I had not even a small clue as to how I would be transformed by the experience of serving the year as the church's seminary intern and living in such a captivating culture. Early in my stay, a fellow American who had been living in Japan advised me to say to myself, "this is good," anytime a negative or hostile reaction arose in response to what I was experiencing in Japan. That piece of wisdom served me well while living in Japan and subsequently when traveling in other countries.

The Tokyo Union Church is unique though there are several other such Union Churches in various world capitals. The congregation was comprised of twenty percent Japanese people, mostly these were people who had become acquainted with Christianity while living abroad working for their company or studying abroad. Predominantly the congregation was comprised of people working for large, international companies; people working for their countries' embassy in Tokyo; and foreign students living in Japan in order to study the Japanese language. Also there were a goodly number of foreign missionaries who were members of the church because they wanted to worship in the English language and have fellowship with people from their own countries.

I was quickly slotted into the leadership of the church, attending and giving guidance (what little I could offer at the time) to the committees that organized and sustained the life of the church. Suddenly, I was working with and advising committee chairs who were vice presidents or managing directors of their companies, higher ups in their embassy and missionaries who had been living in Japan for many years. Even the

kids in the Senior High fellowship were more sophisticated and knowledgeable of the world than I. My saving grace was the gift of humility, which allowed me to remain the student and continue to learn all I could from such a congregation.

Culturally, the year was so rewarding as many opportunities arose for me to study Japanese culture up close. At the same time, I was exposed to so many other cultures as I taught confirmation class to young people from all over the world and was invited into their homes to share in food and fellowship with folks from Africa, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Canada and South America.

Members of the congregation were so generous in teaching me and in sharing the delights of both their own cultures as well as the Japanese culture. A true gift from God was the Senior Pastor, David McDowell. He was in his early sixties and came to serve the church after building his own church in St. Louis, Missouri, from one hundred families to a membership of twenty two hundred. He delighted in encouraging me to do everything in the church that I wanted to do – creating adult education courses, preaching often and heavily engaging in traveling to and learning about all the institutions the church encompassed in their outreach giving. He stood behind me and supported me when I made mistakes.

Working with the Outreach committee led to seeing some of the underside of Japan. Visiting a Korean church that the church's outreach helped to support, I learned from the Korean pastor how severely Koreans living in Japan suffered from discrimination – even Koreans who had been born in Japan. I learned from him about the colonization of Korea by Japan from nineteen-ten through nineteen forty-five. During these years a lot of pressure was put on Koreans to exchange their names for Japanese

names, forced labor was instituted, bringing Koreans to Japan to work at low pay and Korean women were sexually victimized both in Korea and Japan. The worst discrimination was that of citizenship. Koreans living in Japan into the second generation born in Japan were still denied citizenship.

Visiting a home for the adult disabled, I watched men and women use knitting machines with their mouths in order to produce garments. Many of these men were disabled World War II veterans who received no financial help or societal recognition for their sacrifices during the war. Witnessing these disabled people led me to enquire further into the way disabled people were treated in Japan. To be sure one seldom sees a physically disabled person on the streets. The exception to this would be the presence of World War II veterans begging at shrines and temples. Disabled children were mostly squirreled away at home because of the shame their disability brought upon the family.

One of the outreach institutions was very inspiring to me, The Asian Rural Institute. This school was established by a Japanese Christian man to teach adult students from various emerging countries how to improve agricultural methods in their home countries. The students lived and studied at the Institute for one year learning improved agricultural methods and community leadership, and then returned to their homes in order to teach what they had learned. I have never forgotten the Institute's motto: "Give a man a bowl of rice and you feed him for a day; teach a man how to grow rice and you feed his entire village for generations."

Following the year at the Tokyo Union Church I signed up to take a class in "Theology for Students from Around the World" at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute in Celigny, Switzerland. To get to Switzerland I decided to go

through the Soviet Union so I departed Yokohama, Japan, aboard a Soviet ship, *The Baikal*, and landed on the Eastern coast of the Soviet Union in Khabarovsk. This was the beginning of the second stage of debunking America's Cold War propaganda.

The trip was overnight and there was much entertainment in the evening as the Soviet sailors performed energetic folk dances. They were simply magnificent portraying the Cossack dances. A sailor asked me to dance and I was too embarrassed by my lack of skill to dance though I wanted to. I was the only American on board the ship as all the other passengers were Japanese.

When we landed in Khabarovsk, I boarded the Soviet Railroad planning to spend the seven days it then took to cross Siberia in order to get to Moscow. After two days looking at the scenery, I asked the Intourist (Soviet travel agency for foreigners traveling in the Soviet Union) agent if I could fly to Moscow when we reached a city with an airport. At that time, to travel in the Soviet Union one had to pay all costs in advance. The Intourist agent put me on a plane in Nkhadko and it didn't cost me anything to fly four thousand miles.

The aircraft I flew was old and there were some chickens as co-passengers. There was a water drip near my head and the plane rattled quite a bit. I turned up my tray table and saw a Boeing stamp with the year quite a few back from that present. Later I learned that the Soviet Boeing was one retired from service but still purchased by the Soviets for their fleet. Many of the Soviet women on the plane had the dyed yellow hair that only comes from peroxide and their clothing was inexpensive looking and lacking in style. The same was true for the male passengers. I remember thinking to myself if the aircraft

was representative of the economic strength of America's greatest foe, then Americans did not have much to worry about.

Arriving at the Moscow airport I was shuffled in with a Japanese tourist group, which seemed logical since I had come from Japan. However, I asked the Intourist agent if I could be placed in an English-speaking group as I was an American with only slight knowledge of Japanese. From that point on I was driven by myself in an Intourist car to each destination. In Moscow I was pretty much on my own except that I had to speak with the hotel's Intourist agent if I wanted to go anywhere. In addition to Red Square I asked to be taken to a department store. By American standards, there was little to buy and the lines of shoppers waiting to get into the store were long.

Again, Muscovites dressed in clothes that looked inexpensive and lacked fashion. Indeed, I did not see many clothing shops or places to buy cosmetics and the other things women in affluent countries shop for. After being driven around Moscow I understood the lack of shopping. Once off the major thoroughfares, many streets were unpaved and ill kept. I found this to be true also in Kiev and Leningrad (since nineteen ninety-one, St. Petersburg). In Leningrad I was speaking with a man about my age from Denmark. He had come over to Leningrad for the day. As we talked in the lobby of the hotel, we were approached by a Soviet of Mongolian background. He was a film star and wanted the chance to practice speaking English. After talking for some time he offered to drive us around Leningrad and show us the apartment where he and his family lived.

The contrast was enormous after seeing the Hermitage Museum and some of the other cultural sights in Leningrad when we arrived at his apartment. The building was very old and his apartment where he lived with his wife, three children and his mother

was very small, only four rooms. This visit brought into focus all my feelings and thoughts as I traveled throughout the Soviet Union: there was no way such a poor country could really be a threat to the United States. I understood that we Americans had been manipulated greatly.

Leaving Leningrad, I took an overnight train to Copenhagen from where I planned to train non-stop to Geneva in order to participate in a class at the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute in Celigny, Switzerland. The other passenger in the overnight car was a professor from India. He offered me some of his herbs which he had wrapped in a white handkerchief in order to obscure them from the eyes of custom officials. He explained that whenever he traveled he always carried some small food from his own country. Though never having shared a sleeping compartment with a man, I was quite comfortable through the night. Early the following morning, there came a knock on the door of our compartment. I opened the door and a young man came in, quickly closing the door behind him. He introduced himself and explained that he was a member of the Hungarian wrestling team going to Copenhagen for a tournament. He went on to say that he was about to turn eighteen and would have to go in the military when he returned to Hungary as it was compulsory. He asked me if I would go with him to the American Embassy in Copenhagen so that he could seek political asylum. I was so torn, wanting to help him and yet still gripped by some Cold War induced fear. I compromised and gave him my Father's name, address and telephone number and explained that we would help him if he could get to the United States. I was aware of political asylum as the United Nations' High Commissioner for Political Refugees was a member of our church in Tokyo. I wondered what he would have counseled to me to do.

Thankfully, I had the class at the Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland to help me process some of the experiences in the Soviet Union. The students comprising the class were from every continent in the world. In fact, I was the only North American. One component of the class was devoted to how people are manipulated by press and films. As an example the professor showed us two different films on current conditions in South Africa and it was amazing the way the two films brought about diametrically opposed views and reactions. Luckily one of the students was a black South African and he helped us understand how the films did what they did. I became friends with Thomas and learned so much more while we ate together and talked between classes. An intense experience I will never forget occurred when Thomas asked if he could touch my white skin as he would never have the opportunity to touch a white woman in South Africa.

Paulo Freire, who wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was at the Institute, not as a professor for our class but as a visiting scholar. He made himself available at meal times and after meals to converse with any of us who wanted to have a conversation. He was a very good listener and quite humorous. He was quite a controversial figure due to his book which continues to be republished, read and influential. Meeting him was especially meaningful to me as I had become an adherent of liberation theology and he was the first and only South American theologian representing liberation theology with whom I had a chance to converse.

Another component of the class was devoted to Solidarity and was taught by a woman theologian from Poland. She asked me to come to Poland after graduating from the seminary and join in the work of the Solidarity Movement in Poland. She explained that I could make this happen through the Presbyterian Church's Frontier Mission

Volunteer program. She told me that in speaking I “dropped little bombs” and she believed I was well cut out to be an advocate. Living and studying at the Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland for two weeks helped me to understand that manipulation and propaganda are tools of all governments.

Throughout my year as seminary intern, I experienced God affirming my call to parish ministry and by the time I returned to Union Theological Seminary, my doubts were largely assuaged. I fell in love with the Tokyo Union Church as well as the man I was to later marry. Peter and I met in the second part of my Internship and quickly knew that we wanted more time together to grow our relationship. However, I needed to return to the United States in order to complete my Master of Divinity degree. Once I was back in the seminary, I was plagued by the question of how I might serve God by returning to Japan following graduation. Through the helpful intervention of Peter’s mother, I was offered a position teaching Religion and Values at the International School of the Sacred Heart in Tokyo which I accepted.

I returned to Japan in the summer of nineteen seventy-five to very different circumstances from the Intern year. Peter’s family had lived in Tokyo since the mid nineteen-forties. His father worked in Tokyo for Northwest Airlines as an air traffic controller and later as the Vice President for the Orient region. Peter and his brother and sisters were born and grew up there. Though I lived in my own small Japanese apartment provided by the school where I taught, I spent a lot of time with Peter’s father, mother and youngest sister, Mimi, who I taught at the International School of the Sacred Heart where she was a senior. Being that the school was a Catholic school, I taught all the girls who were not Catholic. Teaching religion to the Soviet Ambassador’s eighth grade

daughter was a real stressor. While I did not want to force her to learn about Christianity knowing that Christianity was an anathema to Soviet ideology, I also felt a responsibility to the school's mission.

The student population at the International School of the Sacred Heart was even more diverse than the population of Tokyo Union Church. I had students whose names I could not pronounce, students from countries I knew nothing about, students from countries whose names I had not seen on maps. Again, the gift of humility was a saving grace and I learned from the students at least as much as I taught them.

The Order of the Sacred Heart dedicates itself to teaching girls and young women how to be leaders. The current Empress of Japan, Michiko, is a graduate of the University of the Sacred Heart, just up the hill from the International School. The nuns come into the Order bringing a very sizeable dowry. These nuns had had lives of privilege and the very best educations. The girls and young women they taught were groomed for high achievement in demanding careers. I was awed by the students I taught as I saw that even girls in the ninth grade could organize fund raisers bringing in very large sums of money. While there was little in the way of instruction about administration at Union Theological Seminary, I was able to bridge that gap in working with the students and the administration at the school.

While teaching was a great adventure, I grieved for the parish and wondered if I would be able to remain in Japan and marry Peter. This became a true crisis for me as I felt called to parish ministry and could not see how that call could be fulfilled while living in Japan. Again God's presence was made known to me through the voice of Tokyo Union Church. I was approached after worship on a Sunday morning and asked if

I would be open to a call as the church's Associate Pastor. I was thrilled and overcome with the awareness that God's continued call prevailed in my life. After one year of teaching, I returned to the employ of Tokyo Union Church as their Associate Pastor. Peter and I got married and our two oldest children were born in Japan. I continued as the Associate Pastor until our son was born in nineteen eighty-three.

While living in Japan from nineteen seventy-five through nineteen eighty-six, I visited Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong, China and Kuwait. While this part of my Thesis is not meant to be a travelogue, it is clear to me now that God continued to fashion me as a missionary, pastor and cross-cultural worker through exposing me to so many different cultures and people. My theological beliefs continued to expand far beyond what I had learned at the seminary. In every place I went, I was awed when meeting God's children and there was no doubt in my mind that God dwelt in each place whether it was Christian or not. How people can come away from an experience of interacting with persons from a different culture, in a country completely different from one's own, and not be in awe of God's creativity will probably always remain a mystery to me.

There were many people living in Tokyo from the Philippines. They came to find jobs, university professors and other kinds of professionals working as domestic workers and drivers. These were the years of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos' rule of the Philippines. The economy was stagnant and the corruption of the government surpassed anything that had happened in the Philippines before. The division between the rich and the poor became even greater under the Marcos regime.

I employed one of these displaced Filipino women as a live-in babysitter and through her met many other Filipino people working in Tokyo at menial jobs. These visas

were not easy to get so many Filipinos were stranded in Japan long after their working visas expired. They could not go home to visit children or family in the Philippines because they would not be able to return to Japan and the plentiful jobs in Japan. Like the Koreans, Filipinos could never hope to become Japanese citizens as there is only one way to become Japanese and that is to be born of Japanese parents.

Visiting the Philippines, I saw the problem clearly. There are many incredibly wealthy Filipinos living side by side with very poor people. One sign of the decadence in the Philippines can be seen on the tennis courts where boys are employed to run and get the balls and then return them to the players. I felt as if I were experiencing the decadence of ancient Rome. Their pay was a mere pittance, certainly not a living wage.

Knowing the plight of Filipinos in Japan and in their own country gave me sensitivity to the many illegal immigrants and legal immigrants in America. I employed a legal, Polish immigrant after returning to the States and found her situation to be much like the Filipinos in Japan. While she worked for me her husband died and she was not able to return to Poland for fear of losing her working visa. She worked for me one day a week and then for others every day of the week except for Sundays for ten years. During those ten years she never took a day off nor had a vacation and she sent every bit of money home to family in Poland except for the money she needed to keep herself in the States. During the years she worked here one of her daughters came to the States and took up the same kind of existence.

I visited Hong Kong several times during the years of living in Japan. At that time, Hong Kong was a colony of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Subsequently Great Britain returned control of the colony to the People's Republic of China in 1997.

Hong Kong is comprised of Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula, which are connected by ferries crossing back and forth many times a day, and the New Territories. Today there is a subway system connecting Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories.

Actually Hong Kong specifically refers to the western island colonized and so named by Great Britain. The peninsula of Kowloon which comprises part of Hong Kong was also colonized by Great Britain. Truly East meets West, at least that was so prior to 1997 in Hong Kong. Kowloon consists primarily of buildings of one or two levels and many of these buildings are devoted to making every kind of textile. Clothing, shoes, anything can and is made in Kowloon. Some form of Chinese is the primary language heard on the streets. While Kowloon looks very different from Hong Kong in terms of architecture and infrastructure, still the economy is brisk and people enjoy a good standard of living.

Hong Kong is comprised primarily of tall, western buildings housing banks, luxury hotels and international corporations. On the outskirts of the business district, there are stupendous, luxury homes and apartments. One of the main attractions on Hong Kong is the tram which goes all the way up to the peak of Hong Kong which is built on a very high hill. Hong Kong was known, at least prior to 1997, to be populated by more millionaires than any other country in the world. The extravagance and luxury of colonial Great Britain was everywhere to be seen on Hong Kong.

It is what is called the New Territories, that a very different view of Hong Kong is seen. Most housing is subsistence level at best. The housing which caught my attention was that located in the South China Sea which surrounds the New Territories. Boats of

every description house families of all sizes. Often the boats would be so crowded that one could fall off without even being noticed. Many young children die in just such a fashion. Even though Chinese people have been living on boats in the South China Sea in what is the New Territories for generations, they have no legal rights. Only land dwellers have rights in Hong Kong.

Services such as schools and sanitation are not options for the people living on boats. There is little way out of this kind of poverty without the means of education.

During the 1970's and 1980's many refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos lived on boats also. The vast majority of these refugees lived in camps where there was no privacy and poor sanitation. Some of the refugees lived in the camps for years. Though many, many of these refugees died before getting to Hong Kong, the camps housed at least three hundred and fifty thousand people when I visited in nineteen seventy-nine.

The experience of seeing how boat people live and visiting the largest refugee camp in Hong Kong led me to think about the dispossession inherent in any form of diaspora and to remember one of the greatest diasporas in history, the diaspora of Jews throughout the Roman Empire. The theme of diaspora is homelessness and rootlessness and being a stranger in a strange land. Today there are so many diasporas going on as people flee deadly fighting and grinding poverty in their own countries in order to find some semblance of new life in countries that are not their own.

Generally speaking, immigrants and people of a diaspora meet with resistance and various forms of persecution. This has been true throughout history and continues today in America. What is the Christian's role in such situations? How do Christians give

witness to the Kingdom of God when they are surrounded by many, many immigrants, both legal and illegal, and peoples caught up in a diaspora? Do we as Christians have a particular obligation to displaced people?

God's Kingdom is comprised exactly of immigrants and peoples of a diaspora. God's Kingdom calls believers out of and away from the kingdoms of this world. In God's Kingdom, we are all immigrants. In God's Kingdom immigrant citizens are treated to abundant love, fathomless forgiveness, everlasting mercy and joy upon joy. Such is the quality of God's love for us and, as such, is the model we turn to in relating to immigrants and peoples of a diaspora in the kingdoms of the world.

When we allow ourselves to view immigrants, people from different backgrounds than ourselves, political exiles and people fleeing persecution in their own country as strangers, then we move away from the Kingdom of God. Above all, the Kingdom of God is inclusive as envisioned in the third verse of the great hymn by Frederick E. Weatherly, "The Holy City"

And once again the scene was changed,
New earth there seem'd to be,
I saw the Holy City
Beside the tideless sea;
The light of God was on its streets,
The gates were open wide,
And all who would might enter,
And no one was denied.
No need of moon or stars by night,
Or sun to shine by day,
It was the New Jerusalem,
That would not pass away.
"Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Sing, for the night is o'er!
Hosanna in the highest,
Hosanna for evermore!

God always gives us witnesses and inhabitants of the Kingdom of God to light the way for those of us who float back and forth between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the World. It is our human nature to float between these two worlds because, as the Apostle Paul so clearly saw, oftentimes we do the very things we know we should not do and we do not do the very things we should do. Yet we do rise to occasions, sometimes, and learn new duties and, thus, God's Kingdom moves forward.

I know that God weeps at the plight of so many of God's children and that God is not glorified by all our worship rituals when so many live such pain-filled lives. God suffers indescribable anger at our hard hearts and stiff necks that refuse to bend towards God's light. The God of liberation theology is only glorified when all God's children live in freedom and dignity and are well-fed. The Kingdom of God exists in this world, but many more citizens of that Kingdom are needed and those of us who are part-time citizens of God's Kingdom need to make a solid, unswerving commitment.

I celebrated the tenth year of living in Japan by taking a trip to China. We were a small group of ten people led by a travel agent who had been traveling to China for many years. My husband and my mother-in-law were part of the group. We visited Beijing, Urumqi, Kashgar and Shanghai. While I thought living in Tokyo prepared me for living with crowdedness, Tokyo's teeming millions seemed slight compared to the crowdedness of Beijing. My first thought was of wonder at how the country could feed so many people.

Given that China is a communist country, I expected to see dour faces reflecting oppression by the government. That is not what I saw. Beijing people, very industrious and hardworking looked like any other people living in a capital city. Visiting the

Forbidden City was an occasion for wonder. The intricate, beautiful architecture of the building covering so much space is a mystery. How could it have been conceived? How was it executed? Looking at it and pondering the culture producing it, makes American culture, even European cultures, seem so primitive. Looking at it led me, once again, to marvel at God, who inspired such a place.

From Beijing, we flew to Urumqi which is the capital of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, so named because people living in this most western part of China look completely different from the Han people who populate most of China. People in the Autonomous Region look more like Middle Easterners. Urumqi is on the Silk Road, which begins in Europe and ends in Kashgar. This ancient trade route brought all kinds of people back and forth from China and the people from this region reflect the mixing of many different ethnicities. Though less affluent than Beijing, still we saw no poor beggars. There is lots of industry in Urumqi including the making of silk rugs. Mostly women are used to hand weave the rugs because their fingers are smaller. Before the communist takeover, children wove these rugs.

From Urumqi we went to Kashgar, the western most city in China and the end point of the Silk Road in China. In Kashgar there were very few Han people. We visited the Uyghur people who live to this day in yurts and sleep alongside their animals and horses. Some of those we met had never seen a camera before and were thrilled when the photographer of our group made Kodak pictures of them. They were enthralled with our watches, clothes and cameras. Very friendly people, they encouraged us to take rides on their camels, which we did.

We were fortunate to participate in a Sunday market day while in Kashgar where we got to see Uyghurs demonstrate their prowess with horses. Watching people make their bread, made me think of bagels and realize that what we call bagels came from the Middle East. We visited a home in Kashgar of a person whose culture was more like that of the Middle East. We were richly wined and dined and saw the daughters perform a dance with tinkling bells wrapped around their ankles. We women were then invited to dance with the bells on our ankles and though it was fun, the dance experience was also humbling.

Since the communist revolution, there is only one time zone – Beijing time. Now Kashgar is about 2700 miles from Beijing so you can imagine that bedtime came way before darkness. Before the revolution, there had been five time zones in China. While the Chinese government only allowed a couple to have one child, the people in the Autonomous Region were allowed to have more than one because the western part of China is under populated while most of the country is vastly over populated. The people in the Autonomous Region were also allowed to practice their religions while religion of any kind was suppressed in the rest of China. Currently there is a lot of unrest in the Autonomous Region as the Uyghurs are demanding independence from China.

Our trip ended in Shanghai, the most European looking city in China. Prior to the communist revolution, Shanghai was the financial capital of the Orient. All the multinational corporations and banks had their headquarters in Shanghai. Many of the buildings we saw, both apartment blocks and businesses, were those built by westerners living and working there forty to fifty years ago. They had not been remodeled or kept up

but they were still in use. Our hotel was one such building. Fearing rats invading our hotel room, I left a light on in our hotel room all night.

I mentioned earlier that my mother-in-law was with us. She and my father-in-law had lived in Shanghai working for Northwest Airlines prior to the revolution. My father-in-law stayed until the last days in order to help westerners get on a Northwest airplane before the communists overran Shanghai. Both my mother-in-law and my father-in-law were able to tell me what Shanghai was like before the communist revolution. Life for many Chinese in Shanghai was barely humane before the revolution. Mothers maimed and killed their babies in order to garner more sympathy while begging on the streets. Corpses dead from hunger lay on the streets for days before being removed.

Traveling in China allowed me to see that the Communist Revolution effected some very positive changes for the majority of people. Where pre-communist China had been a country much like the Philippines (only worse) where there were only two kinds of people – the rich and the poor – communist China was busy eradicating those two distinctions. Traveling in China, the fourth largest country in the world with the highest population in the world, allowed me to see how taken up the country is with feeding its gigantic number of people. I saw that Communist China was very busy taking care of itself and found it hard to imagine such a country as a threat to the western world. The cultural richness of China evoked awareness of Christianity being an historical religion. I found myself reflecting on the Apostle Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Athens. Paul could see that those people were religious by their altars and statues and he took the occasion to broaden their concept of God to include an understanding of God that is so much larger and bigger than could ever be portrayed by human hands. I felt as Paul did,

that God is so much more than we could ever imagine or describe. We Christians are so prone to making idols of our words, creeds and the Bible. God is a living God and we cannot contain God in any way. Indeed, we can only experience God in the ways in which God reveals God's self to each of us. It would be blasphemy to assert that our own revelation has more value, worth or meaning than another persons'.

God's solidarity with human beings through Christ is the most profound fact of the Incarnation. Jesus moved among all manner of people as a friend and a servant. Through Jesus we learn that God's solidarity with us is expressed in friendship and in serving one another. There cannot be any other deduction about the Incarnation of Christ than that God has shown us how to live together in our earthly home. Whatever sin is, whatever evil is, it is the force that would separate us from one another. Forces which teach us to fear, distrust and want to kill people who are different from us are a major product of the kingdoms of this World. Truly the kingdoms of the World seem all powerful and the Kingdom of God just barely glimmers at times; yet God's Kingdom resolutely moves forward giving us another goodly person after the ones we have previously loved have been sacrificed on an altar to the kingdoms of the World.

CHAPTER 3

Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

As noted in the Introduction, this passage in Ephesians answers the question of how we are related to one another. After becoming aware of one's call to ministry – the basis of the call and the authenticity of the call – the next hermeneutical move is to understand, according to scripture, how we are related to the people to whom we are called to minister or serve. This is a most important hermeneutical move. From the examples given earlier of Japan and Africa, it is clear that missionaries sent by European colonial powers had little to no biblical understanding of the people they went to supposedly serve. In their defense, one could point to Ephesians 6:5 where slaves are admonished to obey their earthly masters. However, in Africa there was no international slavery until these very same European colonial powers and their missionaries created the institution of slavery in Africa.

The fact that popes, kings and other kinds of mercenaries had no biblical basis for relating to those in Africa continues to reverberate even today. Perhaps enough has been said already about the legacy of Christianity in Africa but more needs to be said about how that legacy has manifested itself in the United States and probably other countries as

well. The fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin on February 26, two thousand-twelve, is a reverberation of the long ago actions of European colonial powers and their missionaries. It is ninety nine percent probable that Trayvon Martin would not have been fatally shot on February 26, two thousand twelve, in Sanford, Florida, had he been white.

In spite of having an African American president in the United States of America, racial equality continues to be a very “iffy” reality in the United States. I could recite many experiences from my life and ministry but the most conclusive evidence I see of the “iffy” nature of racial equality occurs when I am in a park or at a store with my two African American grandsons. When we are together, people do not usually put it together immediately that I am related to them, especially if they are off running and playing a distance from me. More than once, I have seen their attempts to play with a white child or group of white children rebuffed. Once at a public playground in my multiethnic town, I watched with disbelief as a white woman verbally disciplined my eldest grandson in a way I have never heard parents treat other people’s children on that playground. Needless to say, I did not let the woman’s actions go unchecked.

There is a deep stain, a permanent rip in the soul of America stemming from the country’s practice of slavery. Equal rights amendment aside, all the words of Abraham Lincoln and the realized goals of the American Civil War aside, there is a discordant note snuffing out harmony in this country. The ingrained mistrust and the lack of ease between whites and brothers and sisters of color in this country belie the notion that this is a “Christian” nation. The roots of dis-ease and lack of trust between brothers and sisters in America can be traced to the fact that there was never an act of confession, nor an act of

restitution towards African Americans (formerly slaves) on the part of the nation.

Without restitution, reconciliation withers.

The absolute conviction that the God of Genesis loves all of creation, all creatures and all people is the foundation of my faith. It is God's love for all of the creation that gives order, meaning and purpose to existence. The unity in creation is attested to by the way in which all of nature works together to sustain plant, animal and human life.

It is this unity in creation, the unity which is a central expression of God's life, that I believe the writer of Ephesians is speaking about with the words in 4:3 – "*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" The writer of Ephesians uses the inclusive "one" and "all" repeatedly in this passage. Scholars continue to debate whether Jesus intended to create a church, reform Judaism, or simply teach and equip followers. We cannot answer that question definitively but we can say those early followers understood that Jesus taught that which was intended for all people.

Whether or not Jesus intended to start a church is further obscured by the way *Ekklesia* has been translated into English. *Ekklesia* is used around one hundred fifteen times in the New Testament and it means an assembly, a town council. The word *Kyriakos*, which is where the English word church comes from, is used only two times in the New Testament: I Corinthians 11:20 referring to the Lord's Supper and Revelation 1:10 referring to the Lord's day. *Kyriakos* actually means belonging to the Lord.¹⁷

Given the debate as to whether Jesus intended to start a church and the confusion in how *Ekklesia* has been translated together with the inclusive language of "one" and "all" in the Ephesians passage, I believe that understanding Ephesians 4:1-6 as referring

¹⁷ Richard Anthony, "Christ's Ekklesia and The Church Compared," <http://www.ecclesia.org/truth/ekklesia.html>, accessed January 8, 2014.

to all people is a safe translation. One can turn to other scriptures to hear the Gospel being proclaimed for all people – “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:16-17).

Yes, Jesus’ world was a world primarily of Jews and Gentiles but if Jesus walked the Earth today, he would probably be addressing a completely different crowd. Jesus was and is God’s word to the whole world and no culture nor ethnic group nor any other kind of group can claim Jesus as exclusively theirs although this has been done in the past. What is really being talked about here is the question of universalism. Universalism affirms that salvation is for all people. Universalism sets itself over against doctrines of election and predestination which claim that only certain ones are saved. The question of universalism is surely pondered by any thinking pastor or biblical interpreter. For the one who is called to ministry in another culture, it is essential that the question of universalism be addressed.

I am influenced and have been influenced since my first days in seminary by H. Richard Niebuhr’s book, *The Meaning of Revelation*.

Niebuhr asks the question, what is the meaning of Revelation? In order to answer his question he poses several subsidiary questions, such as how can we know what Revelation is? This stems from his understanding of historical relativism, which holds that what we know is dependent upon our point of view. We have the tension that between what is known to one, individually, and what is known to the community, and what is objectively known to be true could all be different things.

In answer, Niebuhr argues for an understanding of revelation that reveals the God who must be value. He arrives at this main issue through a consideration of the relationships between: what is relative and absolute in history; between an objective (external) history and a personal (internal) history; and by looking at our own stories as well as those of the Christian

church. Niebuhr argues that we need to confess our historical limitations, but that it is not evident that the one who is forced to confess that his view of things is conditioned by the standpoint he/she occupies must doubt the reality what he/she sees.

For Niebuhr, God is revelation, so to ask what is the meaning of Revelation leads him to ask what is the value of God, and he concludes saying that the essential goodness of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the simple everyday goodness of love. Therefore revelation is not only an action by God, but it is really God, and this God is greater than we can perceive. In this sense God is Love and Holy Mystery.¹⁸

Thus all revelation is confessional in nature and since revelation comes to each of us through our respective traditions, the correct way to address one another, the appropriate way to share our stories is to confess what we each know and have received. Can you begin to imagine how different the world would look if those missionaries riding on the coattails of the European colonial imperialists had shared their stories, their revelations with people in Africa as opposed to forcing their beliefs upon Africans?

¹⁸ Matthew Charlesworth, a review of Helmut Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, http://www.academia.edu/1574009/Book_Review_of_a_Protestant_Author_viz._Niebuhr_Helmut_Richard._The_Meaning_of_Revelation_pp._x._196._Macmillan_Co._New_York_1960, accessed January 8, 2014.

CHAPTER 4

II Corinthians 5:17-19

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

This scripture speaks to the question of what is the work we are to do together as children of God and friends of Christ. This question presupposes equality among all human beings. For any who would argue against the equality of all human beings, the burden of proof is on them. Equality is not the best word because it implies some kind of hierarchy of value or importance. What we see in nature is an order, a meaning of all creatures. To assign a higher value to any one part of creation denies the order and meaning of all of creation. In the same way, to assign higher value to any one group of human beings denies the order and meaning of all human beings.

The work that we are to do together as human beings is to continue building the Kingdom of God. It is sin that separates human beings from one another and from God. The power of sin is not stronger than the Kingdom of God and sin will never destroy the Kingdom of God, though sin tries. The great hymn, *Once to Every Man and Nation*, also referred to as the Civil War hymn articulates the relationship between sin and the Kingdom of God:

Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side;

Some great cause, some great decision, offering each the bloom or blight,
And the choice goes by forever, 'twixt that darkness and that light.

Then to side with truth is noble, when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses while the coward stands aside,
Till the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

By the light of burning martyrs, Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track,
Toiling up new Calv'ries ever with the cross that turns not back;
New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth,
They must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth.

Though the cause of evil prosper, yet the truth alone is strong;
Though her portion be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong;
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.¹⁹

This poem by Lowell which is now one of the great hymns of Christianity is for me the most theologically profound of all Christian writings. For a thoughtful, reflective person, human depravity and evil present true challenges to any belief or trust in God. The pain created by human depravity and evil is so great at times that our sensibilities as well as our intelligence are offended by the notion of a loving God who is all powerful. In this poem Lowell brings the question of evil right out in the open and acknowledges its power. His affirmation of God's presence in the midst of such suffering and depravity is suitably modest. And that modesty is appropriate for God created us and gives us tremendous power. How we use that power cannot be blamed on God; we have to own it ourselves.

What we learn from Jesus' life and the lives of the many others who have struggled for the sacredness of all life and have paid with their lives for the struggle is

¹⁹ James R. Lowell, "Once to Every Man and Nation," *Boston Courier*, December 11, 1845.

that sin wants desperately to thwart the Kingdom of God. The Christian work of reconciliation cannot be understated for God created human beings for communion with God and with one another. The sense that all of life, all of creation is moving towards something, is the inborn awareness that God's vision of communion is implanted within us before we were even born. One of the great hymns, inspired by ancient Hebrew teachings, says: *You have eternal life implanted in the soul.*

Plato also believed that knowledge was implanted within us and that the struggle of being born somehow displaced this knowledge and that all of living was recollecting what we had been born knowing. All human beings are born with a deep longing for a wholeness, completeness, unity that abides throughout our lives, sometimes surfacing to consciousness, often times being submerged by the busyness of daily life. But this deep longing abides, like thirst unquenched. This deep longing is for communion with God and all God's created world. In finding this communion, human beings glorify God who created us, loves us, abides with us and waits for us in the fullness of creation.

The very first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is: *what is the chief end of man (human beings)?* The answer is: *to glorify God and enjoy God forever.* God is glorified when all men, women and children rise up in freedom to praise God and glorify God. Thus, endemic to the work of reconciliation is the quest for the freedom of all people, for the dignity of all people, the means of life for all people, for knowledge of and communion with all the people that God puts in our path and making friends with those who are so very different from us. Reconciliation rests upon the shoulders of us as individuals. Governments and institutions can enable the work of reconciliation, though they seldom do. The Church at times manages to be about the work of reconciliation,

though it often defeats reconciliation as we know from historical examples as well as from practices going on even now.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

To come full circle, we end up back in John, 14:12: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do.”* There is so much to be done in God’s Kingdom and we each and every one have a purpose in God’s Kingdom. If we accept that we are each unique, as are all God’s children, then ascertaining the meaning of our uniqueness goes a long way towards defining our part in God’s Kingdom. God calls each and every one of us to ministry, according to our gifts and talents. Sometimes this call is to step out of our comfort zone and venture forth into the world to make friends with those who are so very different looking – at least on the outside – from ourselves. Reconciliation is the number one action needed in the world and it is possible to achieve if we each accept the call to be friends with one another as we are friends with God and Christ.

There would be no purpose to history, let alone our individual lives if this scripture from John were not true. Similarly, there would be no purpose or meaning to the lives of all those who are not now Christian, if we would separate them from the salvific work of God in Christ. The greater thing that we are doing is moving far beyond the world as Jesus knew it then. The greater things we are meant to be doing is embodying the love, grace, care for and interest in all people as Jesus so perfectly modeled in his earthly life. Because of Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection, something extra, a significant more was injected into the world. That something extra, that significant more is our

inheritance which we are so freely given and which God desires us to freely share with all God's children, as they cross our paths and as they become our friends when we respond to them in love, as God calls us to do.

God's call to ministry continued to fashion me in new ways once we moved from Tokyo, Japan, to Maplewood, New Jersey. Feeling somewhat like an immigrant, certainly a stranger in a strange land, I sought ways to connect with something in the church that would, if not speak to, at least harmonize with the kind of life I had had in Tokyo. The annual World Missions Conference in Montreat, North Carolina, seemed like just such a venue. Having fellowship with some missionaries from Japan was a tonic. The highlight of the time at the conference was meeting and befriending a woman engaged in a house-building ministry in Mexico that she started on her own.

She was a Jewish woman living in Birmingham, Alabama, who married into a Presbyterian family and subsequently converted to Christianity. Her husband was an architect and supported her ministry by supplying blueprints for the one room, concrete block homes she helped families build in the poor towns across the border from Eagle Pass, Texas. She started her ministry by visiting some of these poor towns and after explaining to a local official her plan asked the official to recommend some families in need of homes. That first summer she went from Birmingham to Mexico in her Oldsmobile with the trunk loaded down with concrete blocks and bags of cement. Together with her husband and the family who would live in the house, the house was erected in a little more than a week.

By the time I met her in Montreat her ministry had grown to include two large trucks, lots of equipment, a storage warehouse and volunteer builders from churches in

Birmingham. She invited me to join in a house-building the following summer and I did. Riding through these poor towns on a bus from Eagle Pass, was shocking. So much poverty just a few miles away from the richest country in the world seemed a travesty. People lived in lean-to structures and metal-looking shanties which have had to been nearly unbearable in the intense Mexican sun. Next to such deplorable housing, her one-room concrete block- houses were a luxury. Her plan included the family digging the foundation prior to the arrival of the volunteer builders so the house could be erected and dedicated in one week.

The opportunity to participate in a house-building was deeply moving. The family cried and thanked us and across the language barrier they showed us what they would put where in the new house. Today, my friend's ministry has grown through contributions so that many houses are built in one summer and volunteers come from churches throughout the United States. The poverty in Mexico can be attributed to North American colonialism not all that different from the European colonialism of the preceding centuries. Ours was the kind of colonialism that went into Mexico and took out the natural resources of value, such as silver, gold, copper, lead, zinc and petroleum, while leaving nothing of value behind. Much as countries in Africa were colonized by Europeans, where no lasting industry was built, so in Mexico no lasting industry was built.

Once I settled into life in New Jersey and began to serve churches in Newark Presbytery, I had the opportunity to lead a youth group from Newark Presbytery on a Mission Trip to teach Bible Schools in churches in Jamaica. While some of us worked with a Bible School in inner city Kingston, others worked with churches in rural towns.

Once away from tourist areas like Montego Bay and Negril, there is great poverty in Jamaica. The mercy of the climate perhaps makes the poverty a little gentler than the poverty in Mexico but the effects are the same: children who receive little to no education, underemployment, shorter life spans due to lack of medical care and increasing social problems.

Jamaica is yet another example of British Imperial Colonialism. As a colony of Great Britain, Jamaica was a bread-basket for England and Europe. British colonialists, using slave laborers, planted valuable crops like sugarcane, bananas, coffee and varieties of citrus fruits to export. Little was done to provide an infrastructure that would contribute to the quality of life for Jamaicans. The same can be said of the way North Americans left Mexico. By this time I was seeing that the face of colonialism is the same despite the country or empire doing the colonizing. The colonizer robs and rapes the land and sometimes the people as well while leaving nothing behind that provides ongoing employment and creates no sustainable industry from which the indigenous people could benefit after the colonizers are gone.

Mexico and Jamaica both challenge Christians to think about the church's role in these countries. Has the church been a liberating force or an institution that contributes to the inexorable grind of poverty in the lives of people? Not only in Mexico but all over Latin America, a Catholicism was introduced which features the suffering Christ as the predominant feature of Christ. Also, the Christian, like Christ, is to live a life of suffering. As consolation for a life of suffering, the Blessed Mother, through the Christian's prayers to her, can intercede on behalf of the suffering Christian. Now a suffering Christ and a

suffering Christian life surely served the purposes of those who colonized Mexico and Latin America.

It is not surprising that liberation theology originated in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. Liberation theology has roots in Africa as well as among African Americans living in the United States. Liberation theology has to do with salvation and it centers on the conviction that salvation is not just other-worldly. Liberation theology gives rise to a need for Christians to respond to the poverty, disease and violence of constantly-at-war-countries in the world. Liberation theology has been plagued by the charge that it is a Marxist political belief. To this writer, such a charge smacks of 'Cold War' indoctrination. Liberation theology's vision for life on Earth as I have come to understand it over the years is a vision of a whole world of free, well-fed people bending down to worship God, to offer God glory and praise. Such a vision inspires me and leads me to believe it is God's vision for all God's children on Earth.

Now we are ready for Part II – Cameroon. We have our self-awareness, an awareness of others as sacred, a scriptural understanding of call to ministry and a theological framework for cross cultural encounter. With God's help and the presence of God's Holy Spirit of Love, it is enough.

PART II
CAMEROON

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Walking along the streets of Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, or the streets of Douala, the financial center of Cameroon, one wonders where are the signs and symbols of the almighty dollar, the magnificent German mark, the famous French franc, the yen, the yuan, the won? This was the first question that came to mind as I visited Cameroon during August, two thousand-thirteen, for two weeks. Having lived and traveled in many parts of the world, I know that today foreign investment is always a sign of our “global village.” However, I saw no signs of the many international companies so frequently seen abroad: no MacDonald’s, no Coca Cola, no BP, no UBS bank, no Honda nor Hyundai, no Hong Kong Shanghai Bank, no Barclay’s. What I did see was a plethora of those awful plastic bags that are all over the planet these days. Those little plastic bags with whosever’s name and logo on the front – those little plastic bags produced in Africa by Chinese investment in one of the poorest countries in Africa – Mali.

I saw a variety of signs in French and English – indeed all the signs were in one or both of these languages. French and English signs, spoken language, television and newspapers all indicate that the modern history of Cameroon was shaped by the French and British colonization from nineteen-sixteen until it gained independence from both France and England in nineteen-sixty and nineteen sixty-one respectively.

Cameroon intersected my life when my eldest daughter, Katherine, married a Cameroonian, Bernard Djom, after meeting and getting to know him during two

consecutive summers of doing volunteer work as a Wellesley College student in Cameroon. During Katherine's first summer in Cameroon, she spent time at the Sackbayemi Hospital in Sackbayemi, Cameroon. She and a co-worker, another Global Youth Intern of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA), worked with Cameroonian staff at the Hospital to update computer programs. David, Katherine's co-worker was the computer programmer and Katherine was the French and English translator.

The Hospital was built in the nineteen-thirties by the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA) and had its last American Director in the late nineteen-nineties. Since then it has been solely directed and operated by the Eglise Presbyterienne Camerounaise (EPC), the French language Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. It was at the Sackbayemi Hospital that Katherine met Bernard Djom, a laboratory biologist. Katherine and Bernard married two years later here in the United States. Bernard and Katherine were working to get his visa just after September, two thousand-eleven. We feared he would not get the visa. Katherine appealed to Jon Corzine's office for help. Because he had just won in two thousand his first term as a United States Senator from the State of New Jersey, we believed his office might offer help and they did.

Bernard taught our family a lot about life in Cameroon. I will always remember one story he told which occurred while he was working at the Presbyterian hospital in Sackbayemi, Cameroon. He told of a baby boy brought to the hospital who was suffering from anemia and malaria. The little boy died before the doctor could finish setting up the blood transfusion. The little boy had been sick a week before his mother could get him to

the hospital. The little boy died because his mother could not come up with the needed 200CFA—about 50 cents.

During the ensuing ten years, Bernard and our family talked about Cameroon many times. One of Bernard's greatest frustrations is HIV disease in Cameroon. While Cameroon has access to condoms and medications to treat HIV disease, they do not have trained personnel paid to go throughout the country's villages to teach people how to use these products. Always these discussions would stimulate the resurfacing of my call to Cameroon; yet I still did not know how I was to proceed.

The opportunity to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree at New York Theological Seminary proved to be the way God would get me to Cameroon. From the first days as a student we were told about the Demonstration Project Proposal that we would have to produce during the second year of study. A good portion of the first year of study was dedicated to the selection of a project and how to write a proposal. This was a difficult period for me as my goddaughter, my best friend's only child, was killed in a tragic accident just a few weeks before I entered the Seminary in February, two thousand-twelve. I was filled with grief and not able to access anything I felt passionate enough about in order to identify a project.

It was during a phone conversation with another student in which she advised me to name something, anything I felt strongly about. Cameroon was the first thing that came to mind and I knew in those moments talking with my friend that God was saying: *Now is the time. Pick up your pallet and walk.* Looking back, the process through which God led me was like Jesus calling his disciples into the deep water. I had been playing safely on

the seashore, planning on performing some benevolent service for people in Cameroon while staying safely at home in Maplewood, New Jersey.

After writing several proposals, including sending soccer cleats to Cameroon and another one which would establish a cultural sharing between three year olds by sending art work back and forth, utter frustration finally forced me to say to myself: *you just have to go to Cameroon; there is no credible way to do a demonstration project involving Cameroon unless you go to that country yourself*. Thus the topic of this thesis came into being. Even though I had found my topic, I was struggling in how to bring together theories about solidarity with making friendships in Cameroon. In a meeting with my advisor, Dr. Moses Biney, he suggested that I focus my work on making friendships and that suggestion brought my ideas into a sharper, clearer focus.

What a wonderful, adventurous journey it has been so far and I believe it is not nearly finished. Friendships formed through two weeks in August, two thousand-thirteen, will continue and grow as friends in Cameroon follow up on matters we discussed and I do the same here at home. I turn now to the incredible, wonderful visit Katherine and I had in Yaounde, Sackbayemi and Douala, Cameroon.

CHAPTER 2

VISITING CAMEROON

Once the decision was made to go to Cameroon and Katherine, my daughter, was recruited as translator, the next step was the challenge of finding out who we could visit in order to make further progress on my Demonstration Project. For obvious reasons, we planned on visiting my son-in-law's family. However, I did not know if they would be helpful to the goals set out in the project. The biggest boon from my son-in-law was introducing me to an employee of the Francophone Presbyterian Church (EPC) who lives in Yaounde. He and his family were our hosts for the week we spent in Yaounde.

Beyond just interviewing them, we spent so much time together getting to know one another. The family was comprised of nine people: father, mother, a college age son, a college age daughter, a high school age daughter and a ten year old daughter. A sister to the mother lived in the home because her house and small business were taken by the government in Douala in order to make a new highway. She was not compensated for her land, home and business. Thus, she moved in with her sister's family in Yaounde. The mother's father was recently moved into their home as he had become ill. He had formerly been living in the village of their people near Douala. The other person living in the home was another ten-year old girl, the mother's niece. She was living there in order to go to school. Prior to this she had been living in her village, near Douala.

My son-in-law, Bernard, and our host family belong to the Baasa ethnic group. For many centuries the Bassa lived along the Atlantic Coast of what is now Cameroon

and they got along by fishing and small-scale farming. They were displaced when the Germans forced them into labor in the Douala and Yaounde regions. The Baasa people benefited in terms of education from the schools built by the Germans.

My second source for introductions to Cameroonians was Jeff Boyd, the Missionary of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America to Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Jeff provided email addresses for the Secretary General for both the Anglophone Presbyterian Church (PCC) and the Francophone Presbyterian Church (EPC). Emails introducing myself and expressing hope for a meeting to the Secretary General of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon (PCC) received no response. Emails to the Secretary of the Eglise Presbyterienne Camerounaise (EPC) were answered quickly. My request for a meeting was enthusiastically accepted. Thus, my entrée to an organization devoted to helping people in Cameroon was the EPC. It was at this point that I realized I would need a translator.

Jeff Boyd also introduced me to a professor at the EPC Theological Seminary in Yaounde who speaks English very well. This professor spent several hours giving Katherine and me a broad overview of the history of both Presbyterian churches in Cameroon. He also invited us, together with our host family, to attend the dedication of a new EPC church on the following Sunday. When we arrived at the church, the professor quickly took me aside to introduce me to many of the male clergy gathered for the occasion. He went on to invite me to join in the procession of pastors for the dedication and the clerk of the presbytery happily handed me a beautiful stole like all the male pastors were wearing.

Beginning a long distance down the road from the church, the processional was very long and comprised of all the different groups within the church. The Elders, all dressed alike, the Deacons, all dressed alike, a band followed by the Choir, all dressed alike, the Sunday School children and lastly, all the pastors. I will never forget the experience of being part of that processional especially since women are not ordained as Elders in the EPC. I was the lone woman among the group of pastors. When we got into the church, the professor led me right up to the chancel and I sat with the pastors. During the service, I was invited to speak briefly and Katherine did the translation. In all that I hoped to accomplish in Cameroon, I never could have imagined receiving such an honor. The experience, I realized at the moment, *was solidarity through friendship*. I continue to wonder if a Cameroonian Presbyterian pastor visiting my presbytery here in New Jersey would be extended the same kind of invitation, the invitation to solidarity through friendship. Participation in the processional and the dedication of the new church was certainly one of the peak moments of my life. I felt such warmth inside myself and also an integral part of what was going on that day. My heart floated up to heaven singing surely, God is in this place.

On reflection, I think I thought like most westerners that the solidarity through friendship experience would come about as a result of something I did or said in Cameroon. There on my second day in Cameroon, God showed me that the gift of solidarity through friendship was God's to bestow, not mine to bring about.

During our week in Yaounde, we were able to interview several pastors in addition to the Secretary General and the professor in addition to all the members of our host family. The first theme which emerged from the discussions is that the EPC has

feelings of abandonment by the PCUSA. No one person pinpointed a reason for the decline in communication which began in the late nineteen-nineties, but a generalized reference to lack of management in the leadership of the EPC was put forth as a suggestion.

Because I heard this comment so many times from church professionals, I knew it would be an area for further investigation once I got home. After coming home I did talk with the person in Louisville, Kentucky, (headquarters of the PCUSA) responsible for mission work in Africa and learned some of the reasons for the breakdown of communication. During the conversation I was assured of the desire to step up communication once again. Some progress is already being made.

In conversations with young people in Yaounde, the need for more jobs emerged as a big concern. While people in Cameroon have enough to eat, there are not enough jobs, especially for young people. As is true in many countries, unemployment of youth is higher than any other age group. There are many factors contributing to this but one of the main factors is that higher education in degree programs does not match the skills needed for getting jobs. Cameroon is increasingly a nation of young, urban people. According to statistics provided by the United Nations in two thousand-twelve, the rural population was stagnant and urban population grew by nearly fifty-eight percent. Forty percent of the population is in the 0-14 age bracket.²⁰ The problem of unemployment of young people seems to be a problem in many countries throughout the world as I have learned since talking with others about this problem.

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme, "African Economic Outlook 2012," <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/African%20Economic%20Outlook%202012%20En.pdf>, accessed January 23, 2014.

Another factor that could be contributing to lack of jobs is the relative absence of foreign investment by global companies in Cameroon. One reason given for this is that the government has not made it easy for foreign companies to operate in Cameroon. Given that the relatively young government has had to be occupied with managing so many differing ethnic groups who communicate in two different languages, it is not surprising that the government has not welcomed yet other entities into participation in the economy. However, had the French and British colonizers left behind manufacturing and kinds of industrial jobs, the current employment problem might not exist.

Leaving Yaounde, Katherine and I spent two days in Sackbayemi as guests of the hospital there. The hospital was built by the PCUSA during the nineteen-thirties and served by staff sent there by the PCUSA in addition to the Cameroonian staff. The hospital had as director a PCUSA missionary doctor until the mid-nineteen-nineties. The buildings are old and most of the equipment also. After the last missionary director left, the EPC was left with the total responsibility for managing the hospital. Until two thousand-thirteen, directors appointed by the EPC were all pastors with little knowledge about medical institutions as well as limited administrative ability. In two thousand-thirteen the current director was appointed. He is a medical doctor as well as a son of the church though not a pastor.

It was with this current director that Katherine and I met. Several of his staff members as well as the pastor of the Sackbayemi Presbyterian Church, which lay at the outer perimeter of the hospital's campus, also joined in the meetings. Right at the start of the first meeting, the director said that our visit was an answer to his fervent prayer for help from the PCUSA. I was quick to make it clear that I was not an official

representative of the PCUSA but only a doctoral student doing research from New York Theological Seminary.

The director shared that the mission of the hospital from its beginning was to treat poor people who could not afford medical care from any other place. Fees charged, lower than those charged by other health care facilities, could not sustain the work of the hospital. However, more than financial help, the director said that medical staff from the United States was needed to help with surgeries as well as to teach new medical procedures. This was the way in which the director said he hoped the PCUSA would help.

I assured the director that communicating with PCUSA staff to request the help of medical volunteers would be a priority when I returned home. In phone and email discussions, this process has begun. Frustration arising from not hearing by email from the director in response to setting up a meeting between himself and the PCUSA missionary assigned to Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo has me at a temporary loss as to the next step to take. Communication between the director and me by email is a cumbersome process at this point. I write to him in English, which he has to have translated into French and then his emails to me have to be forwarded to Katherine so that she can translate them from French into English for my understanding.

The hospital at Sackbayemi will continue to be an area of ministry for me. Newark Presbytery, of which I am a member, already has a mission partnership with the Anglophone Presbyterian Church, PCC, and I am hopeful that, in time, the Presbytery will embark on a mission partnership with the hospital.

The remaining days of our visit were spent in Douala, Bernard's home-town and where all of his family still resides. We were hosted by his elder sister, who also raised

Bernard after his mother died. During these days I had the experience, which is always a good, humbling one for any pastor to have, of being the secondary one. For the family knew Katherine from her previous visit to Cameroon while still in college. They were thrilled to see her again and glad to meet me, her mother. There were many family members in and out of the house each day to visit Katherine and me. We had serious, heartfelt discussions as Katherine and Bernard are divorced and divorce is not something that happens often in Cameroon.

Family means everything in Cameroon and as one Cameroonian told me, if the family is fine, then everything is fine. After a while it became clear to me that Bernard's two older sisters were struggling to figure out Katherine's place in the family since she is divorced and Bernard has married again. I truly felt God's hand on my life as I tried to find the words to communicate that our family continues to love Bernard as a son and a brother and that we also love his new wife. It was painful to talk about the divorce being necessary for both Bernard's and Katherine's happiness. We all cried during these times of sharing and held hands and prayed.

The last time we talked together, and I was aware that Bernard's sisters were still in some pain from not completely understanding, his one sister said smilingly, *no matter what, Katherine is part of this family*. I felt that God was able to use me in these encounters to ameliorate pain caused by two very different societies' approach to family division. Standing outside the evening we left, everyone taking pictures and then holding hands together, I felt the breath of God blowing across the wide expanses of creation binding together people from far-flung places. Holding hands, I felt the life of my hands flowing into Bernard's family members as surely as my blood flows in the bodies of my

grandsons. It was a sacred, holy time when one feels the smallness of one's own life and at the same time the power of one, particular life. Such is the wondrous work of God, who is love and holy mystery, that even one life has eternal meaning and purpose.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

I believe one of the reasons God led me to Cameroon was to learn about the lapse in communication between the PCUSA and the EPC. The mission partnership between the PCUSA and the EPC was the first mission partnership for the PCUSA in Africa. Reinvigorating communication between the two church bodies will be health giving for both. The exchange of people through volunteer service and visitations will spiritually enrich both bodies.

The Sackbayemi hospital has a small cemetery that contains a number of gravesites of PCUSA mission staff and in one grave, the body of a small, American child. As I stood in the midst of these graves, I sensed the Holy Spirit of God's love reminding me of the lives lived sacrificially so that our faith tradition might be passed on. As the cemetery is kind of tucked away towards the outer perimeter of the hospital's beautiful campus, I felt as if God were calling to today's faithful to learn about those buried there and to celebrate their lives and rededicate our own lives to the great adventure and the high calling to just go, pick up our pallets and walk, venture into the deep waters along with Christ. Playing safely along the seashore is not where ministry occurs, it happens in the deep, living waters God walks into with us. The director of the Hospital expressed his hope of bringing family members of those buried to Sackbayemi for a celebration of their lives and work. I am praying that will happen.

Earlier in this thesis I wrote about the need to be a dedicated listener in order to promote spiritually enriching cross-cultural friendships. Listening is at least a four-way conversation. We listen to the other person(s), the other person(s) listens to us, we listen to God as we listen to the other person(s) and the other person(s) listen to God while they

are listening to us. God's word to us speaks through God's word to the other(s). During this encounter we learn about ourselves; we learn new things about ourselves, we are enlarged in our inner most parts. God speaks to our inner most being during such occasions and there is no other way we could learn what God would say to us during such occasions apart from being present for such occasions. Most importantly, without both us and the other(s) present, God's word both to them and us would never be heard.

We can never completely know ourselves for God reveals to us who we are anew in each new occasion. A new creation means learning new things about ourselves as God speaks to us during our cross-cultural encounters as well as during those encounters in our everyday lives, revealing new truths about us as we hear new stories from others. Being a Christian can be such a great and grand adventure if and when we respond to the call to be agents and/or catalysts of reconciliation. When, with courage, we step away from the seashore and venture into the deep waters, it is likely that we will experience being a new creation.

Finally, in the words of Frederick Buechner in a blog:

Friends are people you make a part of life just because you feel like it.

There are lots of other ways people get to be part of each other's lives, like being related to each other, living near each other, sharing some special passion with each other like P. G. Wodehouse or jogging or lepidopterology, and so on, but though all or any of those may be involved in a friendship, they are secondary to it.

Basically your friends are not your friends for any particular reason. They are your friends for no particular reason. The job you do, the family you have, the way you vote, the major achievements and blunders of your life, your religious convictions or lack of them are all somehow set off to one side when the two of you get together. If you are old friends, you know all those things about each other and a lot more besides, but they are beside the point. Even if you talk about them, they are beside the point. Stripped, humanly speaking, to the bare essentials, you are yourselves the point. The usual distinctions of older-younger, richer-poorer, smarter-dumber, male-

female even, cease to matter. You meet with a clean slate every time, and you meet on equal terms. Anything may come of it or nothing may. That doesn't matter either. Only the meeting matters.²¹

The words of this Blog speak to the very heart of what it means to interact with others in a way that demonstrates God's love as it is shown in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. God meets each and every one of us in and through Christ and befriends us, no matter who we may be. In turn if we show up to all the events and interactions required in our daily lives, presuming we will be meeting and making friends, then God finds an opportunity to work the miracle of creating solidarity through friendship. Some may wonder how I can presume that strangers I will encounter will become friends. My challenge to such folks is why not presume friendship? The willingness to presume friendship when meeting strangers is part of the exciting adventure of being friends with God.

Presuming friendship enlarges us from the inside out. This experience enlarges our spiritual story as it does the spiritual story of others we meet. Presuming friendship is a hallmark of the Kingdom of God. The kingdoms of the World would deny us this experience by teaching us to fear, mistrust, even at times seeing others as evil but the still, small voice of God whispers to us to reach out, to walk out into the deep water, too see others who are different from us as God sees them: children in whom God is well pleased. The hope that all of us in the world can live in peace, tranquility, joy and love cannot be brought about by governments, not even by the church. This high hope resides in the possibility that each and every individual can make a difference when they presume friendship. Each and every life is valuable and worthy in God's sight because

²¹ Frederick Buechner, "Friends," <http://frederickbuechner.com/content/friends-0>, accessed January 8, 2014.

each and every life is a possibility for moving the Kingdom of God forward in the kingdoms of the World.

I always have to end with hymn. Sitting in church as a child, long before I had any interest in listening to long winded sermons, I thumbed the hymnal reading the compelling poetry and much of my theology derives from hymns. I believe it is no accident that Christianity is the ‘singiest’ religion in the world. To be sure other religions have music as part of their rituals but there is no other phenomena quite like the heartfelt singing by Christian congregations each and every time they gather. In my experience the spirit’s ascension toward Heaven during worship is greater than the spirit’s ascension at any other time. I am not exactly alone in thinking this way. I have heard it said that the Aboriginals of Australia believe the universe was sung into being and that when Aboriginals go on their walk-about they are looking for these ancient song lines written in the Earth. Perhaps God did sing us into being for God does certainly speak to me and many others through the great hymns of the faith.

“God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens”

God, who stretched the spangled heavens, infinite in time and place,
Flung the suns in burning radiance, through the silent fields of space;
We, your children in your likeness, share inventive powers with you;
Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race;
Known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space;
Probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power,
Facing us with life’s destruction or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us a new;
Children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you.

May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor well begun
Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and Yours are one.²²

Catherine Cameron's words describe our relationship to God and God's great faith in us throughout time. Her world is one in which God's children are endowed with great power for both good and bad. The exciting adventure of dreaming dreams that fulfill God's wishes for us is the basic stuff of life. Her hymn says that so much depends on each and every one of us and so much does depend on how we spend our precious time on Earth. There are splendors, wonders, and a new creation awaiting us when we use the creative powers God gives to each of us in order to be servants. It is possible that God's will and our wills will become one if we believe that it is possible and dedicate our individual lives to that purpose.

²² Catherine Arnott Cameron, "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens," in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Westminster/John Knox Press, Louisville, KY: 1990) 268.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL IN RELATION TO THIS FINAL THESIS

According to my Challenge Statement, my visit to Cameroon to make friends through solidarity would result in a model for cross-cultural ministry. I believe I accomplished this challenge. Anyone reading my Final Thesis would be better able to undertake the challenges of being a missionary or a short-term worker in a foreign country with a culture different than their own. Quite apart from the pointers I lay out in this thesis, reflecting upon this writer's experiences and thoughts would lead a reader to be much more aware of their own cultural presumptions and biases. A reader would also be challenged to look at their own theological beliefs in relation to the writer's beliefs. Of more significance, a reader might choose to reflect upon their own life experiences and question how God has been shaping them for ministry through those experiences.

In the Introduction to the setting I point to the variety of congregations I have served in both Japan and the United States as sound basis for attempting my project in Cameroon. One of the outcomes of my visit to Cameroon is to work on facilitating communication between the Francophone Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America. Even though the Francophone Presbyterian Church in Cameroon was the very first mission partnership in Africa established by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, communication between the two bodies has broken down. Facilitating communication between two

denominations is complex and requires patience. Learning to effectively navigate three different presbyteries here in the United States has educated me to the day-to-day workings of different governing bodies. Serving a congregation in Japan in which there were quite a few American missionary members taught me a lot about the inner workings of denominational structures, including how my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, operates. Knowledge of denominational hierarchies will facilitate what I am able to accomplish in assisting in improved communication between the Francophone Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

In the preliminary analysis I linked solidarity to reconciliation, the work that all Christians and, indeed all people, are called to do. We do this work, ministry, because through God in Christ we have union with all God's children. In the spirit of *Adna* which is a Bassa word meaning getting together or union. *Adna* includes supporting one another spiritually and materially as we engage in the ministry of reconciliation.

The preliminary analysis reflects accurately what happened in Cameroon and, hopefully, what will happen in the future.

Three goals were identified in the plan of implementation.

Goal One: Begin to understand the culture and context of peoples' lives in modern day Cameroon. To accomplish this goal, three strategies were described:

- Strategy One: Read a history of Cameroon and its culture.
- Strategy Two: Read theological works of current writers in Cameroon
- Strategy Three: Meet and talk with people from Cameroon living here in the United States.

The goal was met utilizing the strategies shown above. My reading was hurried and not as many books were read as I would have liked to read. This was due to the length of time it took for me to identify my project proposal. Nearly half of year two of the D. Min program was utilized in working with project ideas that were finally rejected. I continued to read when I returned from Cameroon which has been necessary for the writing of this final thesis.

Strategy Three was my saving grace. In addition to having a son-in-law who is Cameroonian, there are quite a lot of Cameroonian Presbyterians living and worshipping within the bounds of Newark Presbytery which is my home Presbytery.

I knew from many conversations with my son-in-law that it would be necessary to take as much extra money as I could to Cameroon with me. I am so thankful I knew to do this as the hospitality extended us everywhere was so generous. Katherine and I gave sizeable monetary gifts to the family who hosted us in Yaounde and the family who hosted us in Douala. It was meaningful to have the money to buy small gifts for the children each time we met them.

Goal Two: Meet with a small group of informed people who will contribute wisdom, encouragement and guidance to my project and seek the advice of those engaged in cross-cultural work and ministries living in other places.

- Strategy One: Meet with a small group in my home to get to know one another and work on the project proposal.
- Strategy Two: Contact by telephone and email those who do not live in this area in order to discuss and make plans for the actualization of my project proposal.

The small group of people in Goal Two is the Site Team for this project. One member served as a Missionary to the Democratic Republic of Congo in the 1970's. Another member has done volunteer work in both Tanzania and Mali and has adopted four children from Mali. Another person on the site Team is married to a Japanese and lived for quite some years in Japan. She has traveled to several countries in Africa to meet with graduates of an organization she is involved with. Each of these Site Team members read my proposal and gave feedback and reactions to the ideas in the proposal. I got many practical suggestions from the Site Team that helped in planning for the visit to Cameroon.

Jeff Boyd, Missionary to Cameroon from the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America, has been and continues to be a valuable resource. He advised me as to the timing of my visit in order to avoid the two rainy seasons and times of very high temperatures. Katherine and I were much more comfortable physically than I had imagined we might be. Jeff introduced me to a professor at the seminary in Yaounde which is part of the Francophone Presbyterian Church. Meeting the professor led to the very special experience we had participating in the dedication of a new church. Also the professor gave us a very good historical understanding of both the Francophone and the Anglophone Presbyterian Churches in Cameroon.

Jeff and I continue to email and work together on increasing the communication between the EPC and the PCUSA. Jeff is very interested in meeting with the Director of the Hospital at Sackbayemi to begin discussions about a volunteer American medical doctor who would work at the Sackbayemi Hospital to help with surgeries and to teach new techniques to medical staff at the Hospital.

Jeff has also helped me with another project in Cameroon that I am working on together with the Global Mission Committee of Newark Presbytery. We are working to raise sixty thousand dollars for a Presbyterian college in Cameroon. Jeff critiqued the proposal I wrote and has agreed to continue working with the Global Mission Committee on this project.

Goal Three: Establish a travel itinerary to Cameroon and a plan of action which will guarantee contact with people involved in serving the needs of the people in Cameroon.

- Strategy One: Engage a translator to travel with me in Cameroon who is capable of translating French to English.
- Strategy Two: Enlist the help of Presbyterian Missionaries to Cameroon, Jeff and Christy Boyd, in setting up meetings in Cameroon.
- Strategy Three: Identify contacts in Cameroon through people from Cameroon who live here in Maplewood, New Jersey, and other places.

Goal Three is the most important one in the project as meeting this goal actually got us to Cameroon. Making a trip like we did is not difficult and I wanted whatever I wrote as a final thesis to encourage others to do a similar thing themselves. In my case, I worked through the Presbyterian Church as that is the institution I know best. Certainly any Presbyterian wanting to make such a trip could begin by asking their pastor for information regarding the location of Presbyterian missionaries and how to contact them. Contact with a missionary is the springboard of success to travel in an African country if one wants to do more than visit a tourist sight. To those who are interested in meeting with and living among people indigenous to the country to be visited, a missionary is a

necessary contact. In Cameroon, apart from tourist hotels, there just is not a Hotel 6 or a Holiday Inn and even if there were a person would not really become acquainted with Cameroonian people by staying in such a place. Where to stay in order to meet and get to know people is the first question to address with a missionary. It happened that our host families came to us through my son-in-law, Bernard. Even if we did not have a Cameroonian in the family, we could have stayed with the professor who also invited us to stay in his home. It is also possible that the missionary might have housing sufficient to host people. Also the denomination may have housing available for a visitor's use.

Once the housing issue is addressed so that contact with people living in that country is secured, the next step to focus on is what one wants to accomplish in meeting people from another country. It does not have to be a big accomplishment, small accomplishments count. My focus was simply having conversations with people in Cameroon engaged in helping others. The timeline in Appendix A of the Demonstration Project Proposal is a guideline that might be adapted for use by anyone wanting to travel to a foreign country with a specific purpose or goal in mind.

The budget in Appendix 2 of the Demonstration Project Proposal is not reflective of how much our visit actually cost. Our airfares were \$2000.00 dollars per person. Lower airfares could have been had if we had booked our flights earlier. The amount budgeted for food and lodging is realistic of what we spent. Even though we lived in homes, we choose to contribute to the hosts' cost of feeding us. A good bit of the money budgeted for food and lodging was used to buy gifts for our hosts and their children even though we had taken gifts from America with us. Though Cameroon is a fairly affluent

country in terms of African countries, still their income is so small compared to the income of an American. The cost of food is also very high in relation to their incomes.

Research Questions

Question One is an historical and sociological question asking what has shaped modern Cameroon and how has Christianity contributed to Cameroon.

It can be seen from the two languages of the Presbyterian denomination in Cameroon and the two languages used throughout the country that European colonialism has shaped so much in Cameroon. There are well over two hundred ethnic languages spoken in Cameroon. While it seems that the true liberation of Cameroon could only come about with the reinstitution of one of the ethnic languages, selecting one might bring about the end of Cameroon as we know it today. It is accurate to say that European colonialism robbed Cameroonian people of language. Missionaries riding in on the coattails of the European imperialists participated in robbing the Cameroonian people of their language. In many instances Christian missionaries robbed Cameroonian people of their names as they insisted that when baptized a new western name had to be chosen. Because many, many slaves were captured and taken in Cameroon, the European imperialists robbed the country of its best resource – its people. So language, names, resources, these were robbed from the Cameroonian people by Europeans, many of them Christians.

Christianity is strong in Cameroon and now that the country is independent of outside rule, there is the chance that the church in Cameroon can begin to reflect more of the Cameroonian culture. Christianity made many positive contributions in Cameroon especially in the areas of education and health care. Schools and universities built by missionaries from Europe and North America continue to provide many Cameroonians

with good educations. Hospitals are such important institutions in any culture and that is why I am committed to helping the Presbyterian Hospital at Sackbayemi to stay alive.

Question Two is the biblical and theological one asking about the meaning of the New Creation and the Ministry of Reconciliation as these relate to *Solidarity Through Friendship*. I believe I made a good case for *Solidarity Through Friendship* being a Biblical model as a human way to exemplify the New Creation and engender Ministry of Reconciliation. Our vision in any one generation is so limited and we only ever glimpse such a small part of God's purpose in creation. Given the biblical texts that we considered in this thesis, I think it can be firmly stated that *Solidarity Through Friendship* is a big part of God's plan for our generation and perhaps for many generations to come. Moving the Kingdom of God forward depends on *Solidarity Through Friendship*. Depending on guns, missiles and rockets to protect ourselves is so like the attempts made by the ancient Hebrews. God warned them time and again that weapons and armies would not suffice. The ancient Hebrews did not hear the message and we don't either.

Human capacity for destruction stands at unparalleled capacity. I am reminded again of the words in Catherine Cameron's hymn:

We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race;
Known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space;
Probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power,
Facing us with life's destruction or our most triumphant hour.

All Earth's people are now perched on the edge of a great chasm. None of us knows just what lay beyond the chasm. Is it Eden or is it Armageddon off in the distance beyond the chasm? In the story of the Rich Young Man and Lazarus, the rich young man, known in Latin as Dives, walks past Lazarus who is begging on the street for even a tiny bit of food. Dives walks right on by as if there is a chasm between Lazarus and himself.

Lazarus dies and is carried off to be with Abraham. Dives dies and is tormented in Hades. When Dives sees Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, he begs for Dives to be sent to give him just a drop of water. Abraham tells Dives no that he walked right past Lazarus giving him not even a crumb so now is the time for Lazarus to enjoy good things. Dives then begs for someone from the dead to be sent back to warn his brothers and, again, Abraham says no to Dives. Abraham tells Dives that if his brothers did not believe Moses and the prophets, they will not believe someone sent from the dead. Now there is a great chasm between Lazarus and Dives.

Chasms are the psychological and emotional distances created when people do not want to see and react to others who are different from them. So many chasms exist in our world today: rich and poor, youth and adults, black and white, male and female, oriental and occidental, Jew and Arab. The list goes on and on. Now most of these groups have the resources for devastation and death sufficient to destroy the Earth as we know it. Chasms must be bridged if we are to reap Eden and not Armageddon. Solidarity Through Friendship is just such a bridge.

Question Three is a practical, methodological one asking how does one prepare oneself for a cross-cultural visit and what details are involved in order for the visit and experience to happen. Much of this has been discussed previously in this final Thesis. It is important to have a format for meetings and discussions even if the format is not later used. Just by virtue of thinking through what kinds of topics and questions are to be raised helps to prepare one for immersion into another culture. I like questions because they remind me that I am there primarily to listen to the other person. To ask a worthwhile question requires that I know something about what is important to those I

am visiting. I like broad questions which give the other person space to respond in a variety of ways. For example, in relation to my visit to Cameroon, I could plan to ask the question: “Do you think your Government should to use just one language, either French or English?” Instead, I prefer to ask a question like: “What are the challenges for your Government created by the many languages spoken in Cameroon?” The first example is a conversation stopper. Its’ answer does not lead to more conversation. The second example is a conversation enhancer. Its answer will lead into more and deeper conversation.

Another point raised in question three has to do with customs and expectations about gift giving. Research into this aspect of culture will provide good insights into cultural expectations and will help the visitor to feel more comfortable when entering the home, office or institution of the one(s) visited. Usually gift items not available in the country one is visiting are welcomed gifts.

Ministerial Competencies

I chose Historian/Theological as a ministerial competency because I intended to shape my visit around teachings from the Bible, especially the teachings of Jesus. During the years of experience in ministry, I have formed theological beliefs which reflect biblical teachings but go beyond Scripture because the world we live in is so different from the world Jesus experienced. Many of the situations we encounter are not spoken to in the Bible or in the teachings of Jesus. Visiting Cameroon in order to make friends was a test of theological beliefs formed over a long period of time. I expected to experience spiritual awakenings that might be unique and yet I wanted to see if my current theological beliefs were sufficient to guide me during the encounters with Cameroonians.

I had several peak spiritual experiences: participation in the dedication of a new church, standing by the gravesites of American missionaries at the Sackbayemi Hospital and holding hands and praying with Bernard's family just prior to our leaving Cameroon. These were historical experiences that could not have occurred in any other place or at any other time. During these historical experiences God made known God's presence in a unique way. God's presence affirmed our *Solidarity Through Friendship*.

I believe theology derives from reading the Bible with one hand and the newspaper with the other. A professor in seminary attributed this saying to Karl Barth. The meaning of this expression is that God is a living God who is revealed in history and continues to be revealed in the present. The stumbling stone in many expressions of Christianity is that the God of history revealed in the Bible gets frozen in place and the living God is put in a straightjacket. Because so many of us have fear based personalities, we can only allow for the God revealed in history and that God can be explained, described and contained. The living God who is revealed in a myriad of ways in all times and all places is too frightening to many. The living God cannot be made into an idol, exhaustively explained, nor made to fit into the categories and words of humankind.

The living God stands with all of us at the edge of the chasm before us awaiting the opportunity to deliver us safely to the other side of the great chasm. God requires of us courage, faith, trust and obedience. It is scary to think that human hope might lay in the ability of people to exhibit courage, faith, trust and obedience. Actually our hope does not lie solely in the hands of human beings because God works through us and with us to bring about realities that we cannot imagine. God's Holy Spirit of Love is the eternal and eternally present gift of God through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. There is no

power human beings can make or contrive that is stronger than God's Holy Spirit of Love.

I chose Ecumenical and Cross-Cultural Communicator as the second ministerial competency because *Solidarity Through Friendship* depends on the actions of all good people who desire peace, tranquility, joy and love. Religious denomination or sect is not a salient factor in this endeavor. Spiritual commitment is a salient factor in that the good gifts of God are given to those who wait upon the Lord regardless of whom they are or where they live. Those called to lead the way in *Solidarity Through Friendship* can lead in spite of the differences in religious or denominational stance. Leading people of varied backgrounds requires an ecumenical spirit and practical knowledge of others' backgrounds as well as sensitivity to how others communicate. I have found this the most demanding ministerial competency to work towards for it can never be mastered. The more we involve ourselves in a ministry working together with others who are different from us, the more we have to learn and seek to understand. Additionally, our need for compassion and sensitivity to the concerns and needs for others must become internalized until the others' realities are at least partially our own. Again, this points to meaning of the Incarnation. In Christ, God became one with us and experienced our depths and heights. The incarnational, living God continues to dwell in our midst assisting us in that we could not do by ourselves.

I chose Writer as a third ministerial competency because I have always dreamed of writing books. I do not know that this final Thesis is worthy to be called a book. Nonetheless the exercise of writing this Thesis has moved me beyond writing sermons. I was educated to write sermons that primarily deal with exposition of the scriptural text.

Such sermons would contain little of me and a lot about the text. Writing this Thesis has been a struggle for me in that it is so much about my experience and beliefs.

We live in a “me” culture where most people refer to themselves as the final voice in decisions. Living in Japan taught me a different way to approach decisions. Japan is not a “me” culture. It is a culture that hinges on identity which is based on being a part of the group. In such a culture, no one person wants to stick out as that is a direct threat to one’s identity. There is a saying in Japan that the nail which sticks out gets pounded down. I internalized an identity contingent upon being part of a group, on being part of a “we.”

I can give an example of a “me” identity as opposed to a “we” identity coming from my self-understanding as a pastor of a church. While serving the Tokyo Union Church, I would never have thought to call it my church. Being rooted in the Priesthood of all Believers put forth by Martin Luther, the Tokyo Union Church understands itself as a “we” organization regardless of the person speaking being a pastor or lay person.

When I returned to the States and began to interact with other pastors and be active in the presbytery, I got a neck jerk every time a pastor or ruling Elder would speak about “my” church. Hearing someone refer to “my” church made me feel like an alien in an alien land. “Our” church signifies that we are part of the household of God which knows no boundaries. “My” church signifies a building with people that are characterized as a church because “I” am the leader.

This Thesis is a first step in the attempt to become a writer. Primarily the merit lay in the attempt though it is the result which will be evaluated. Pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree at New York Theological Seminary and completing this Demonstration

Project has been a nurturing and growing experience. It has been an opportunity to turn a dream into a reality and an opportunity to respond to a long heard call to ministry.

In final conclusion let us return to the New Creation, which is one of the biblical texts comprising this writer's canon within the canon, and belief in God's sovereign acts within and throughout history to make persons new. New Creation is related to the doctrine of irresistible grace which says that God can act, at any moment, through the Holy Spirit to bring about faith and salvation to individuals and whole groups of people. Trust in God's New Creation and irresistible grace relies on people whose minds are radically open to the present, as well as to the future. Radical openness to the present hinges on a commitment to the purpose of any given moment. Meaning and purpose of the present prepares the receptivity necessary to apprehend God's presence and purpose in even the most mundane of activities.

I saw a film many years ago that interviewed Golda Meir. The part that has remained with me across the years takes place when she is polishing a silver teapot. She states that when her mind was heavily burdened with decisions to be made, she would pick up a piece of silver to rigorously polish. She would commit all of her attention to that small job, never allowing her attention to waver. As she dedicated herself to that one small task, decisions would work themselves out without her awareness. Her description of obedience to even a very small task, trusting God to work without her conscious assent, is precisely how the New Creation moves forward propelled by irresistible grace.

With radical openness to the present and obedience to the tasks set before us, God acts in and through our lives. Believing this is a stretch for most westerners, if not impossible to grasp. Our drive towards activity, towards being in control of results

contrives to convince us that our wills, minds and assent are the essential commodities in all that we accomplish. Easterners, who practice a variety of forms of meditation, are more conversant with the action of emptying oneself, seeing with the third eye and apprehending the wisdom that comes when one is only aware of breathing. The writer of Philippians was thinking of this when they wrote in chapter two, verse six: “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,”

This passage in Philippians is the basis of the Kenotic Theory of Atonement which states that Jesus was able to fully enter into human history and the experience of human beings by emptying himself of divine attributes. This scripture and this theory of atonement have shaped my understanding of what it means to be servant of God, created in God’s image. Self-emptying being the spiritual practice inviting the presence of God through the Holy Spirit into our lives and actions; humility is an absolute necessity to this spiritual practice. Humility is, perhaps, the most difficult of all spiritual gifts for Americans to receive. Humility is so opposite to the values enshrined by popular culture and the historical myths of our country.

The gifts I have received through the writing of the Demonstration Project Proposal, traveling to Cameroon and witnessing day-to-day life there and writing this thesis are renewed trust in God’s New Creation, a rededication to the radical openness of the present moment, a reenergizing awareness of obedience to even the smallest of daily tasks set before me and a vital need for the humble act of emptying myself in order to be God’s servant in the life God is giving me today. So often in the past I have experienced receiving more than I gave when I engaged in an act of giving. I received so much in traveling to Cameroon to spend a brief amount of time as a witness to Cameroonian daily

life. A cameo of the weeks in Cameroon depicting the great amount of time Cameroonian women and female children devote to food preparation, housekeeping and overall care for the family, with joyful attention to their work, will remain when many other details are long forgotten.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Demonstration Project Proposal

SOLIDARITY THROUGH FRIENDSHIP

By

REV. BARBARA SHAW JENKINS

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

January 31, 2013

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

As a Presbyterian Pastor with 38 years' experience serving congregations in Tokyo, Japan, Essex and Sussex Counties, New Jersey and Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, I now feel called by God to ministry in Cameroon. The challenge is to design a model for cross cultural ministry which brings participants to the table to share in an equitable shaping of the ministry to be undertaken. Believing that solidarity through friendship is an appropriate model for cross cultural ministry; I will plan and take a trip to Cameroon, using Cameroon as a case study for this new model of cross cultural ministry.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

I have always lived in cities and it is in such settings where I have experienced God's call to minister to those who are marginalized by poverty, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Maplewood, New Jersey, is a town whose culture is shaped by its proximity to New York City—the dynamics of the “Big Apple” are experienced just a twenty minute train ride away.

I became interested in Cameroon through marriage as I heard stories of my son-in-law's growing up there. He grew up in Douala, which is the second largest city in Cameroon and the economic center of the country. Specifically, when he told the story of growing up and learning to love soccer even though neither he nor the other children he grew up with could afford soccer cleats. He told this story to me as I held his infant son, our first grandson. I felt God's call to ministry in Cameroon when he expressed his thanksgiving for being able to buy his son soccer cleats.

While Cameroon has one of the strongest economies in sub-Saharan Africa, the country is poor, with an average annual income of \$2,300 per family. Still, today, families cannot afford to give their children soccer cleats or many of the things we in Maplewood, New Jersey, provide for our children so easily. Prior to coming to the United States, my son-in-law was working at the Presbyterian hospital in Sackbayemi, Cameroon. He tells of a baby boy around two brought to the hospital who was suffering from anemia and malaria. The little boy died before the doctor could finish setting up the

blood transfusion. The little boy had been sick a week before his mother could come up with CFA 200—about 50 cents—for transportation.

Now is the time for me to explore God's call to ministry in Cameroon. The way to accomplish this is to travel to Cameroon in order to meet Christians and others engaged in helping people in Cameroon, especially children, to achieve better lives. I believe that solidarity with others can be achieved through friendship, those whose lives are completely different from our own.

I have served a variety of congregations, both in Japan and here in northern New Jersey, and have lived in this area for over twenty-five years. I have many contacts who are knowledgeable about solidarity through friendship and ministry in an international context. These people will help prepare me for this challenge. By traveling to Cameroon, I hope to begin making friends and discern how God might use me to work with people and institutions in Cameroon.

CHAPTER 2

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Remembering Jesus' earthly ministry, we recall that Jesus did not come with a plan to reorganize the Sanhedrin nor a design for a capital campaign for renovating the sanctuary. Rather, Jesus came as one who walked the streets and moved along with ordinary people plying their trades and completing the daily chores of living. In order to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on Earth, Jesus appealed to regular folks to join him in caring for those who were ill, hungry and marginalized. He consistently practiced this kind of ministry as he energized and motivated those who followed him to do the same kinds of things. His interactions with the well-to-do and decision-makers occurred when he took opportunities to warn those people of the dangers of their way of living and acting towards the ill, hungry and marginalized.

Jesus' followers continued after his death to practice the kind of ministry Jesus taught them and we can continue to see pieces of the ministry Jesus taught his followers in the church today, though the church does a lot of other things that Jesus probably could not have imagined nor wanted.

As a pastor I have worked with congregations and individuals who have wrestled with how to respond to the needs of those who are marginalized by poverty, sexual orientation, ethnicity or addiction. And I have wrestled with how to respond as an individual. Usually those same people who desire to help others are often the ones who

doubt their abilities, especially their individual ability, to really make a difference in the world.

As individuals, it is an act of faith to believe that each of us can make an impact on the lives of others, even those who live in another part of the world. The Bible and Theology can strengthen the belief of those who lack conviction in their abilities to significantly impact the lives of others.

Indeed, I turn to John 14:12 as encouragement for the exploration of solidarity through friendship: “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father” (NRVS).

Since the movie takes place in South Africa and speaks to the very theme of my project, I want to refer to and commend to all readers: *The Power of One*. I watched this movie in the 1990’s with my growing children and it impacted and changed all of us. Though really sad in places, it fills the viewer with a victorious joy at one instance of the power of goodness overcoming the power of darkness because one small boy cared.

Accomplishing the challenge of this project will require the information, advice and logistical support of many people. Finding the people who can advise, help and encourage me in this endeavor has begun here in Maplewood, New Jersey. Some of the people reside in this area, some in other parts of the United States and some in Yaounde and Douala, Cameroon.

Solidarity derives its meaning from Colossians 1:5:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all

things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.

Solidarity is the reconciliation to God in which we—all people and all things, and I take this to include all animal life—share. It is a fact of our creation and we cannot alter this solidarity. We can live into this solidarity, experiencing for ourselves and sharing with others the New Creation, and enjoy earthly peace and joy, or we can ignore and denigrate it and live, as we now live, in a world of dastardly violence and fear.

Certainty that God desires all God's children to care for one another is engendered in Paul's teachings to the Ephesians in 4:1-6. This passage in Ephesians is one of the Biblical teachings of our unity in Christ. Unity in Christ makes possible friendship, which is so necessary to solidarity.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

The responsibility we have as Christians to work for unity among all God's children is expressed in II Corinthians 5:17-21:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who

reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The reality in which we live is that we are saved through Christ and have unity in Christ, but we are not reconciled to one another. Indeed the New Creation in Christ is begun but it groans in travail until all are reconciled to one another. It is to this great ministry of reconciliation I wish to continue my call in new surroundings, as I have always understood myself as an ambassador for Christ.

In the indigenous language of Cameroon, Bassa'a, the word *Adna* means getting together or union. The word conveys the meaning of getting together in the same community of Spirit through the blood of Jesus Christ, supporting one another spiritually and materially. Making friends is the first step in our ministry of reconciliation and *Adna* is the action work of friendship. Those who participate in *Adna* are ambassadors or agents of reconciliation. I am about *Adna* in going to Cameroon in the faith and hope that we can experience and show forth in the fruit we will bear, with God's help, the New Creation.

CHAPTER 3

PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL 1 Begin to understand the culture and context of peoples' lives in modern day Cameroon.

Strategy 1 Read a history of Cameroon and its' culture.

Strategy 2 Read theological works of current writers in Cameroon.

Strategy 3 Meet and talk with people I know from Cameroon here in the United States.

Evaluation will be made by Site Team members.

GOAL 2 Meet with a small group of informed people who will contribute wisdom, encouragement and guidance to my project and seek the advice of those engaged in cross-cultural work and ministries living in other places.

Strategy 1 Meet with the small group in my home to get to know one another and to work on my project proposal so that it may come to fruition.

Strategy 2 Contact by telephone and email those who do not live in this area in order to discuss and make plans for the actualization of my project proposal.

GOAL 3 Establish a travel itinerary to Cameroon and a plan of action which will guarantee contact with people involved in serving the needs of the people in Cameroon.

Strategy 1 Engage a translator to travel with me in Cameroon who is capable of translating French to English.

Strategy 2 Enlist the help of Presbyterian Missionaries to Cameroon, Jeff and Christy Boyd, in setting up meetings in Cameroon.

Strategy 3 Identify contacts in Cameroon through people from Cameroon who live here in Maplewood, New Jersey, and other places.

Strategy 4 Establish contacts in Cameroon through Cameroon family members living in the United States.

Evaluation of all three goals will take place in two parts:

- Part 1 will be a written diary of travel to Cameroon and of the meetings held with persons there as well as their stories.
- Part 2 will result from meeting with Project Advisor, Dr. Wanda Lundy, and Site Team members following my return from Cameroon to administer the **Ministerial Competency Assessment Instrument** provided by New York Theological Seminary. In addition, Site Team Members will be invited to submit written evaluation beyond the scope of the **Ministerial Competency Assessment Instrument**, if they wish to.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question 1 Historical/Sociological

What has shaped the culture(s) of modern day Cameroon? How did Cameroon come to be a country divided by two languages? Do the same forces that account for the two languages also have to do with the poverty? What are the tribal languages in Cameroon? How many tribes are there in Cameroon? How has Christianity contributed to Cameroon?

Question 2 Biblical/Theological

What is the meaning of *New Creation* in the writing of twenty first century theologians? How does the meaning of *Ministry of Reconciliation* relate to the meaning of *New Creation*? Does *Solidarity Through Friendship* exemplify God's *New Creation* through the life, death and resurrection of Christ?

Question 3 Practical/Methodological

What are the necessary steps leading to a successful trip to Cameroon for the purpose of establishing friendships or *Adna* with people serving other people in Cameroon?

- -Develop schedule of persons to meet with in Cameroon: Rev. Dr. Festus Ambe Asana, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon.

- Meet with Honga Mbondo Elcana who works at Ingenieur Bio-Medical in Sackbayemi, Justin Forzano, Cameroon Football Development Program in Kumba.
- A schedule is in preparation now for meeting leaders in HIV Education and medical treatment of HIV Disease in Cameroon who might also be interested in **Adna**.
- Meet with graduates of the Asian Rural Institute, an agricultural institute in Japan which brings community leaders from developing countries to Japan in order to learn improved agricultural methods and ideas for Christian community leadership.
 - Language translation
 - Format for meetings and discussions
 - Finances
 - Medical
 - Local customs and expectations – gifts?

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION PROCESS

The Ministerial Competency Assessment Instrument designed by New York Theological Seminary will be given to all the persons who assist me in this project. Results of administering the instrument will be emailed or mailed to Dr. Wanda Lundy at the end of project.

Evaluation is designed within the project in the form of a diary of all meetings and events as well as stories of life in Cameroon as shared with me.

Ultimately, evaluation will come in the form of confirmation of my call to ministry in Cameroon. The understanding of call in the Presbyterian tradition is that a call is both personal and public. A personal call is one like Isaiah, Jesus and others in the Bible received from God. The public aspect of call results when one performs such actions as to elicit a following of people who want to engage in the same actions. This is to say that my work in Cameroon bearing fruit will be the final evaluation.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

Historian/Theologian – Ministerial Competency #1 and #2

The success of this project depends on knowledge of Cameroon's history and culture as well as a theological self-awareness of what I am attempting in this project. There are many possible pitfalls for the project—appearing to be rude and/or insensitive due to cultural differences regarding the meaning of friendship to people I will meet in Yaounde and Douala. Success also hinges on perceiving ways to further solidarity through friendship while I am in Cameroon. Ultimately, success depends on faith in God's ability to work through and with the actions of people devoted and committed to our Christian call to be Ambassadors for Christ and to embody the New Creation in Christ as exemplified by friendship through solidarity.

Ecumenical and Cross-Cultural Communicator - #4 and #10

Many of the people I meet and hopefully engage in solidarity through friendship with will probably not be Presbyterian. Some of the people on the Site Team are not Presbyterian. Thus I have chosen the language of friendship through solidarity because it transcends denominations and religions. A challenge will be to discern if this language works with people I meet in Cameroon.

While I will be traveling with my own translator, Katherine Jenkins Djom, language is only one thing to be translated. I will depend on her for translation of body language and other forms of non-verbal communication; further, important customs,

especially around eating, greeting and gift giving figure into ways in which Katherine will assist me.

Writer - #2 and #6

A hoped-for outcome of this project will be the completion of a book as the Thesis requirement for the Doctor of Ministry program at New York Theological Seminary. The book will include diary entries; reflections on the phenomena of solidarity and unity; sections which encourage and motivate ordinary people to engage in solidarity through friendship as it relates to their lives; practical steps in beginning friendships through solidarity; and reflect spiritual reflections on the meaning of call to Reconciliation and New Creation. This book will be a story in many voices.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

2/2013	Proposal Submitted to Dr. Wanda Lundy
2/2013	Month for researching and reading about the history and culture of Cameroon
2/2013	Emails to Jeff and Christy Boyd in Cameroon
2/2013	Telephone calls, emails and meetings with people residing in the United States who have knowledge and/or experience with cross-cultural endeavors.
3/2013	Month for researching and reading about solidarity as it is expressed in various ways by a variety of people and organizations.
3/2013	Determine need for Visa, Shots and Medications – Katherine Djom
3/2013	Plan tentative itinerary
4/2013	Month for researching and studying Biblical texts for Proposal
4/2013	Meeting with Site Team (Prior meetings will have taken place)
4/ 2013	Follow- up emails and phone calls regarding meetings in Cameroon
5/2013	Month for reading novels and children’ books written by people from Cameroon
5/2013	Finalize list of people to meet with in Cameroon
6/2013	Obtain Vaccinations and Medications
6/2013	Determine appropriate clothing, both professional and casual, for traveling in and meeting with professionals in Yaoundé and Douala.
6/2013	Purchase gifts to present to churches and individuals/families with whom we stay while in Yaoundé and Douala.

APPENDIX 2:BUDGET

Travel costs including visas, shots, passport, etc...for myself and translator	\$3000.00
Cost for food and lodging for two weeks – tentative	\$1000.00
Cost of gifts to be given in Cameroon	\$250.00
Cost of duplicating materials	\$100.00
Editor's fee – tentative	\$250.00
Books - tentative	\$200.00

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APPENDIX B

CAMEROON INFORMATION²³



Area -	slightly larger than California
Land	<i>total:</i> 4,591 km
Coastline:	402 km
Climate:	varies with terrain, from tropical along coast to semiarid and hot in north
Terrain:	diverse, with coastal plain in southwest, dissected plateau in center, mountains in west, plains in north

²³ <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/blccameroon.htm>

Natural Resources:	petroleum, bauxite, iron ore, timber, hydropower
Natural hazards:	volcanic activity with periodic releases of poisonous gases from Lake Nyos and Lake Monoun volcanoes
Environment - current issues:	waterborne diseases are prevalent; deforestation; overgrazing; desertification; poaching; overfishing
Geography - note:	sometimes referred to as the hinge of Africa; throughout the country there are areas of thermal springs and indications of current or prior volcanic activity; Mount Cameroon, the highest mountain in Sub-Saharan west Africa, is an active volcano
Ethnic groups:	Cameroon Highlanders 31%, Equatorial Bantu 19%, Kirdi 11%, Fulani 10%, Northwestern Bantu 8%, Eastern Nigritic 7%, other African 13%, non-African less than 1%
Religions:	indigenous beliefs 40%, Christian 40%, Muslim 20%
Languages:	24 major African language groups, English (official), French (official)
Literacy:	<i>definition:</i> age 15 and over can read and write <i>total population:</i> 79% <i>male:</i> 84.7% <i>female:</i> 73.4% (2003 est.)
GDP - composition by sector:	<i>agriculture:</i> 43.7% <i>industry:</i> 20.1% <i>services:</i> 36.2% (2004 est.)
Labor force:	6.68 million (2004 est.)
Labor force - by occupation:	agriculture 70%, industry and commerce 13%, other 17%
Unemployment rate:	30% (2001 est.)
Population below poverty line:	48% (2000 est.)

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